



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

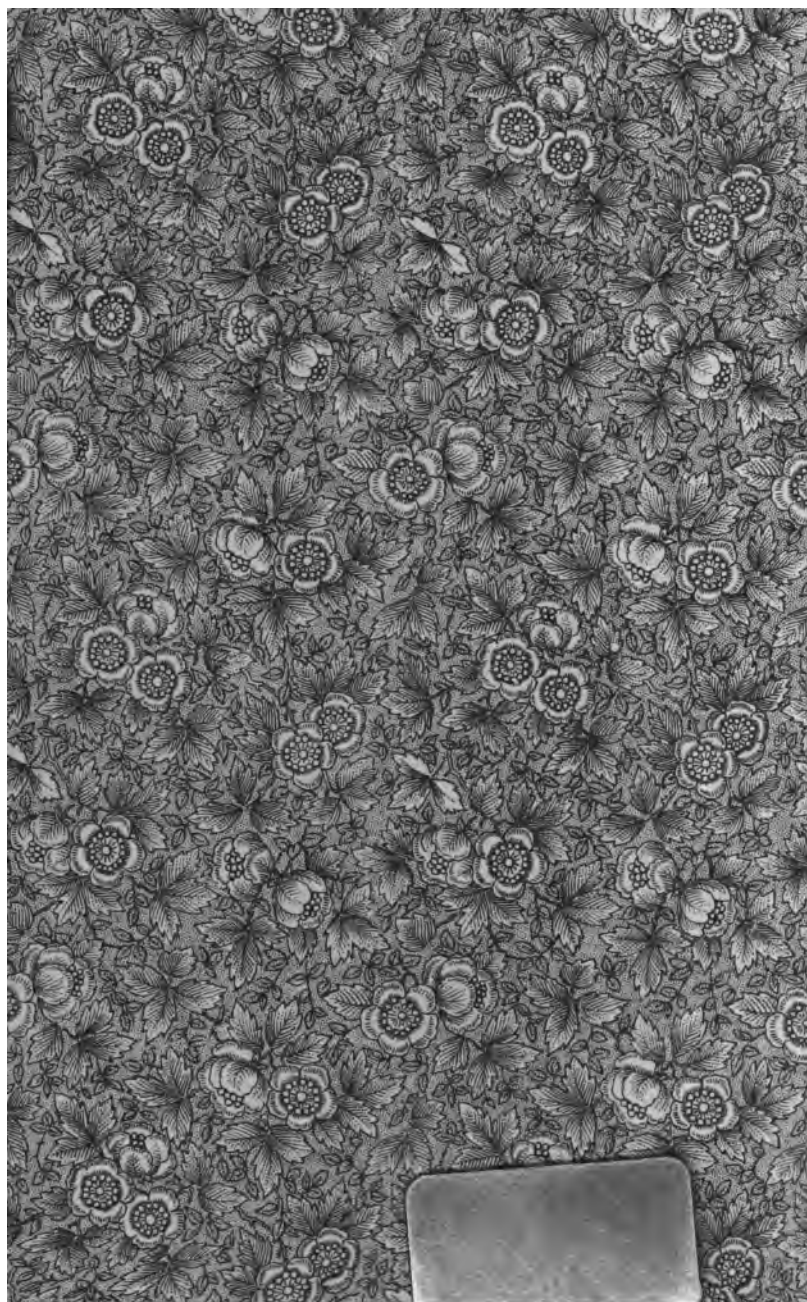
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

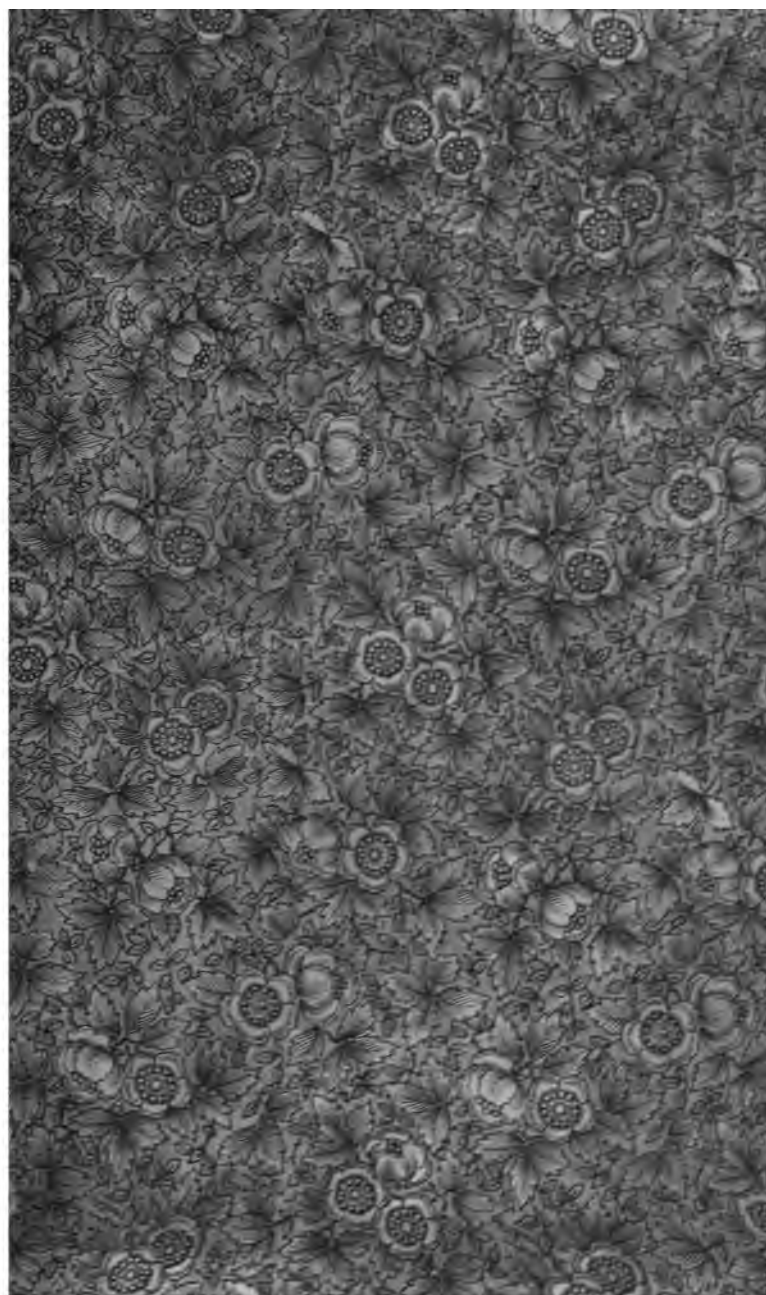
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

TRUE HEARTS









600056471T

FAIR FACES AND TRUE HEARTS.

A NOVEL.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“MARGARET MORTIMER’S SECOND HUSBAND.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON: F. V. WHITE & CO.,
31 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1882.

251. h. 25.

F. V. WHITE & CO.'S
SELECT NOVELS.

Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. each.

The following Volumes of the Series are now ready:—

MY SISTER THE ACTRESS. By FLORENCE MARRYAT.

'“My Sister the Actress” is the best novel we have had the pleasure of reading from the pen of Miss Marryat.’—*John Bull*.

THE DEAN'S WIFE. By Mrs EILOART.

'Any reader who wants a good story thoroughly well told cannot do better than read “The Dean's Wife.”’—*John Bull*.

A BROKEN BLOSSOM. By FLORENCE MARRYAT.

'A really charming story, full of delicate pathos and quiet humour; pleasant to read and pleasant to remember.’—*John Bull*.

TWO MEN AND A MAID. By HARRIETT JAY.

'Compared with the former works of the authoress of “The Queen of Connaught,” this novel must be pronounced second to none.’—*Graphic*.

SWEETHEART AND WIFE. By Lady CONSTANCE HOWARD.

'The story from first to last is attractive, and cannot fail to command wide favour.’—*Whitehall Review*.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.		PAGE
DALRYMPLE AND ITS INMATES,	.	1
CHAPTER II.		
A NIGHT OF HORROR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES,		13
CHAPTER III.		
UNCLE OSMYTH—HIS AND MY FUTURE CON-		
SIDERED,	.	38
CHAPTER IV.		
FROM YOUTH TO MANHOOD,	.	50
CHAPTER V.		
TRAVELLING COMPANIONS,	.	61
CHAPTER VI.		
DAY DREAMS AND NIGHT VISIONS,	.	86

CHAPTER VII.

MORE CHANCES THAN THE NAME OF ONE, .	103
--------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

MY MISSION TO ITALY, . . .	121
----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IX.

NINA'S STORY, . . .	139
---------------------	-----

CHAPTER X.

ATONEMENT, . . .	158
------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI.

MAUDE RIVERS, . . .	172
---------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII.

NOTHING VENTURE NOTHING HAVE, .	193
---------------------------------	-----





FAIR FACES AND TRUE HEARTS.



CHAPTER I.

DALRYMPLE AND ITS INMATES.



NEVER knew what fear was until the night of my grandfather's death. I was then a boy between seven and eight years of age, and I take this as the commencement of my history, because it was then that thought, or that part of it with which the imagination is associated, awoke in me. Until this event, and another which immediately

succeeded it, I had been a happy, thoughtless child, perhaps a little backward for my age. These two incidents were so intimately connected with each other, that it is no wonder my boyish imagination blended them together; and that I came, therefore, to regard the prior, and more natural event as the cause of my awakening to a knowledge of the sorrow and evil which exist in the world, and bring fear and trembling in their train.

It is doubtless interesting to watch the gradual progress of a child's mind, as by gentle, easy steps it walks into knowledge, and loses the innocence, freshness, and credulity which has previously charmed us. It is only in rare cases that the mind is rudely aroused, and called, as it were, into *impromptu* action.

I remember my grandfather as being a tall, thin old gentleman, with grey hair, short grey whiskers, and a well shaven

chin; he wore black clothes, and a wide black cravat, which made his neck look very thin and long; and the face above the cravat, when I reverently managed to uplift my wondering eyes' thereto, which was seldom, struck me chiefly as being apparently unable to smile. It was a long face, and serious; and some way it was afterwards connected in my mind with the Pharisee of the gospel, as an embodiment of that typical personage. This was the result of later reflection; for it so happened that very soon I heard a good deal about that, and other Bible characters.

I saw my grandfather every day, after my own fashion; for children will covertly watch people who are interesting to them from their peculiarity, or their marked difference to all others with whom they associate; and, perhaps, as I had no companions of my own age, my curiosity about older people was keener, and more exer-

cised. But I only came under my grandfather's observation once a-week, that is every Sunday; and hence my slight acquaintanceship with his face. It follows that we knew but little of each other; but I believe he liked me, and possibly his seriousness of aspect was the result of that liking, and of the remembrance of my orphaned state; or, more likely, of the fair and well-beloved daughter who had died at my birth, and to whom he had never been reconciled after her imprudent marriage. But I only knew then that it was Sunday, and my grandfather had a long, sober face.

There came a longer interim when this face was withheld from my yearning gaze; for, strange as it may seem, I looked eagerly forward to these weekly seasons of intercourse. I also missed my companion, a lady who was a distant connection of our family, and who therefore had been selected

to take charge of me, at my first coming to the hall, upon the death of my father three years previously.

I suppose she was in constant attendance upon my grandfather, as she was evidently a great favourite of his, and the house-keeper told me that the master was very ill. I saw, consequently, very little of Miss Earl at this time ; but I always slept in a room leading out of her own ; and I remember one night being awoke by a loud knocking at her door. She rose quickly, and putting on a dressing-gown, left the room. How long she was away I do not know ; but I was again awoke by her as she gently removed me from the cot. I noticed that her face was pale, and her hand trembled while she dressed me. She told me that my grandfather wanted to see me, and that he was very ill and changed ; but that I must not be surprised or frightened. She kissed me, after the

.

manner of ladies, who seem to imagine a caress to be necessary at all remarkable seasons, as a sort or charm, or preparation for the stoical bearing of misfortune. Oh, how fruitless ! how unreasonable, to expect bravery to be the result of that sympathy, which excites the emotional sensations !

Her kindness made me all the more nervous, and I clung tightly to her hand as we entered the sick-room. There was an old woman standing by the bed, occupying herself alternately in waving a large fan, and wiping the sick man's forehead ; but she moved a little aside as we came near.

The room was lit with candles, which gave but a feeble light ; but enough to show me a face of yellow whiteness, sunken cheeks, and eyes lustreless which once had been sharp and searching ; the beard, which had grown a little from inattention, and which was not white like the rest of the hair, but of a grizzly grey shade, added to

the strangeness of the face. There was a blueness on the lips, and they were parted, and showed the teeth, or rather the stumps of what had once been such. I heard the nurse whisper, "I doubt me it is full late."

But my grandfather saw me, and tried to stretch out a long, bony hand towards me, which sank helplessly again on to the coverlet. I crouched beside Miss Earl, and tried in vain to hide in the folds of her dress, as a few faint words issued, at intervals, from the livid lips. "Take—care—of—him—I leave—you power—use—it if—"

I was fascinated by the strangeness of his look, and watched and listened for more words—words which never came; but, instead, there passed over the face a kind of contraction or spasm; a gurgling, catching sound came in the breathing; the jaw sank; the eyes distended; and Miss Earl gathered me into her close embrace, as she

8. *Dalrymple and its Inmates.*

dragged rather than led me away—not again to bed, but to the housekeeper's room, the occupant of which gave me a cup of warm coffee, and pitied and wept over me. All of which I did not then understand to mean that my grandfather, and my natural protector, was dead. I gathered afterwards, from their conversation, that the awfully strange sight I had seen was his death ; and that it had not been intended for me to be there ; only so it had come to pass.

For the next few days I almost lived in this room ; I was scared and nervous, and it was far away from that part of the house to which I had been most used. When here, I felt as if beginning a new life ; but when I ventured out into the accustomed haunts a shadow hung over me, a weight clouded my spirits ; so that I quickly returned to the housekeeper, and solaced myself with watching her canaries building

their nests, with some vague and dim idea that it was a symbol of life, hope, and joy, and a proof that everything was not come to an end with my grandfather's death.

Another proof was visible to me in the manner of Miss Earl. She had been always cheerful with me, but I noticed a change now ; for in this quiet life with the canaries I had begun to reflect. I saw that Miss Earl had a less anxious and brighter countenance—a more vivacious manner—and that there was a ring of contentment in her voice, which I had never missed before, but which was new to me. I noticed her more than I had ever done ; and this is a sketch which I mentally made of her then, and which I otherwise could not have replaced. She was, perhaps, past thirty years of age ; very dark complexioned, but ruddy ; her hair was black, glossy, and abundant ; it was carefully arranged in massive plaited

coils ; her eyes were dark and piercing, but her mouth was mobile and smiled easily : in fact, just now it seemed as if she were trying to control some irrepressible satisfaction, which was inconsistent with the season given, from courtesy by friends, to mourning for the departed.

I was fond of Miss Earl, as she had treated me with great kindness ; and I was pleased to note this improvement in her appearance. It signified happiness and hope ; and I hailed it with delight. I heard the housekeeper say that “ Mr Osmyth had come home from foreign parts, and that he would be a pleasanter master to serve than the old one, and not so mean.”

This I silently resented as an imputation upon my grandfather. But the feeling gave place to one of satisfaction as I heard her further state, that “ No doubt Mr Osmyth and Miss Earl would make it up and marry now, as anybody could see how

Miss Earl was minded. And no wonder; for Mr Osmyth was enough to witch one, with his canny ways; not to say that Miss Earl had kept single all these years for him, and Mr Osmyth had been under promise to her all along. And now they have come together, we shall soon see the end; for Miss Earl is not one to stand nonsense, and has a good deal of influence over Mr Osmyth, though I have my doubts whether there is much love on *his* side." Thus I overheard Mrs Mayne confiding to her most intimate friend, amongst other things, while I was an unnoticed occupant of her private room.

Miss Earl took very little notice of me during these, to me, dismal days. She flitted in and out the room in a hurried and abstracted manner, as she gave her orders to the housekeeper; but occasionally I noticed her looking earnestly at me, as if I was, for some reason, the object of

her meditation. She gave directions about my mourning, and said that Mr Osmyth and I would be "chief mourners,"—an expression that I did not then understand; but I knew that it was intended I should go to the funeral, which ceremony I much dreaded; and the night before it was to take place, I fell asleep uneasily, in sorrowful expectation of what the morrow would bring. I had not slept peacefully or happily since Miss Earl had roused me to see my grandfather die.





CHAPTER II.

A NIGHT OF HORROR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

ALL my fearful foreboding of unknown dismal experiences, for the next day, made my slumbers lighter than their wont. Some slight noise therefore may have awoke me ; but whatever it was, it had thoroughly roused me, and I noticed that the light of the moon shone brightly into the further room ; for, as I have before said, my own chamber was adjacent to that of Miss Earl, and went out of it, being really intended for a dressing-room. The last few nights my room door had been left wide open, as Miss Earl knew of the

timidity I had felt since my grandfather's death. The bed was so placed as to be directly opposite to the one occupied by Miss Earl, in the further room.

I sat up in bed, and was about to call out to Miss Earl, as I felt nervous at being awake alone in the dead of night, after what had occurred. My words were arrested on my lips as an exclamation from Miss Earl caught my ears ; she was also awake, and sitting up in bed, watching something with eager, curious eyes ; her gaze was towards my room, but on the wall which separated it from her own, and therefore beyond my range of vision.

The moon was shining so brightly that I could see all this distinctly, and a gleam of moonlight shone across Miss Earl's bed, and tinged with silver one side of her face and head. She looked very handsome in her white night-dress, with her magnificent black hair loosened, and flowing waywardly

upon her chest and shoulders. Till then I had not known her to be beautiful, and I think, young as I was, the sight struck me artistically.

How long I watched, with admiring eyes, I do not know ; or whether I had not seen something of this before the exclamation came. I imagine it must have been so, and that immediately after her utterance the dark figure of a man was at her bedside ; a bright short instrument flashed in the moonlight, and a stream of blood flowed upon the white sheet, coverlet, and pillow, steeping the beautiful black hair, as the head dropped backwards, and the dishevelled locks spread themselves abroad.

I knew only horror and a sensation of helplessness, as my tongue seemed too large to move in my mouth, when I felt, almost instantaneously, a figure beside me and a hand across my mouth. I *heard* the person

near me before he touched my mouth ; but I *dared* not look. In fact, my eyes were transfixed upon the further room and the bed. But now I was not only horror-struck, but my blood seemed absolutely creeping in my veins from dread, as I imagined myself to be in the hands of a murderer.

I had been taught to pray, and my heart was lifted upwards in that silent, but most earnest desire for help which only extreme peril can feel. The prayer was assuredly heard ; for my heart was comforted by the knowledge of a protecting Presence.

I remembered no more, till I felt upon my face the kisses of Mrs Mayne. She had been the housekeeper at Dalrymple for years, and had always made a good deal of me — chiefly for the sake of my dead mother, I believe, as I do not think I was more engaging than other boys who are passing rapidly beyond their babyhood.

I was in her own bedroom, and from the fire in the grate, which was not usually there, and partly from her assumption of a nurse's authority, I imagined myself to be an invalid.

Instead of the rough hand over my mouth, I felt the application of something cool and refreshing to my brow. I was not inclined to talk, being still drowsy and stupid, as if my head had received a heavy blow or knock. This I imagined to be the case, and that I was recovering from a murderous attack or else about to die, which latter thought my drowsiness favoured. Something of this I must have expressed, but my kind nurse only shook her head, and said,—

“Not dying now, thank God! nor murdered neither.”

Notwithstanding this assurance, and I suppose as a natural consequence of all the horror I had gone through, I was

continually seeing my grandfather, in a white robe, with a peaceful countenance and a yellow face shining like the brass guard in front of the fire, beckoning to me with an outstretched bony hand, and I kept calling out, "Yes, grandpapa; I'm coming," in a half-conscious delirium, till kind Mrs Mayne besought me "not to frighten all her senses clean away."

Presently I was aware of some benign presence, whom I asked if he were the angel come to take me to grandfather; and he replied soothingly,—

"Yes; all right, my poor child;" adding aside, "Do not thwart him, Mrs Mayne; he will do nicely now."

Then the doctor, for it was he, raised me, and gave me something bitter to drink, which I did greedily, being so parched and thirsty. I think his words calmed me as well as the medicine, for I fell asleep with a sensation of safety, and awoke refreshed and sensible.

Had everything been as usual at this period, I might have come to believe that the past direful occurrence was only a frightful dream that my sickness had conceived and fostered. But this mercy was denied to me. I missed Miss Earl, for her bright, cheery, bustling manner had been my only comfort and amusement in this cheerless old mansion, which, though handsome in itself, was filled with cumbrous, old-fashioned furniture, with faded draperies, and carpets whose brightness of colouring was gone—a house in which old servants moved decorously and solemnly about—a house which suppressed even a child's gaiety, and in which I had found Miss Earl to be the only sympathetic companion.

She was missing, and in waiting and watching for her my mind recalled and grasped the horror and importance of the scene I had witnessed. There were other reasons why this could not be forgotten—

no one attempted to disillusion me; and it appeared to me that, from being a subject of no consideration, I had become a reigning power in the house. Pity and sympathy were new to me, and the doctor and Mrs Mayne even consulted together about the necessity of deferring something, which I understood was an event of importance, on my account—"the inquest." I did not like the word, nor indeed perhaps any thought that came to me at this time, I was so depressed. But I did not comprehend the significance nor painfulness of what was to happen.

Mrs Mayne said, "It was a sad pity for me to be mixed up with it;" and the doctor patted my head, and held my hand in such a deprecating manner, that I well understood that something new and painful was before me. Something of this might be visible in my face, for the doctor said,—
"Perhaps the sooner the better—the child's

imagination is excited ; and suspense and uncertainty is as difficult to bear, and as injurious, as the reality can be."

There was, therefore, no time given me to get morbid about the prospect of this inquest. The only other preparation I had was from Mrs Mayne, who said,—“ My poor lamb ! you will see *her* in the room ; but do not mind that—you need not look, dearie.” This was when the dreaded hour came, and old Simpkin, the butler, had been sent to fetch me.

I was relieved to find my footsteps directed to a large room on the lower floor, and not to the bedroom. This reassured me, though I still trembled like an aspen leaf ; and Simpkin, in his solemn manner, essayed to comfort me by saying, “ It will soon be over, Master Yorke.” The room was a servants’ hall,—a very large one ; not that in usual use, but one which was occupied when there were a good many additional servants,

—when, in fact, there were visitors at Dalrymple, the blessedness of whose advent had, however, never been known to me.

On entering this room, I saw my good friend Dr Angus, who drew me to his side. There was also present the clergyman of the parish ; and I recognised several other gentlemen in black coats, whom I had been accustomed to see, in shooting attire, about the woods and fields, or in breeches and buckskins when out with the hounds. Altogether it was not a very alarming sight, as I had none of the shyness which some children suffer from ; and, moreover, I had really sufficient courage to face and make the best of any evil which I could not avoid—a quality which has adhered to me through life, and done me service, although it is a somewhat ignoble kind of valour, as true bravery, if not seeking, will not deign to shun the test of it.

I noticed amongst those assembled a very

handsome though sad-looking man—a dark-haired, bronze-faced stranger, tall and thin, and in the figure and attitude reminding me of my grandfather, but with a more open and pleasant countenance. There was, in fact, sufficient family resemblance to him to convince me that this was my Uncle Osmyth ; but there was here none of the extreme and crabbed gravity that marked my grandfather's face. Except for its present sadness, Uncle Osmyth had a most agreeable expression. He looked at me both searchingly and compassionately, nay, even with some anxiety ; and altogether, from this, and from the attention of the others, I found that my small presence was deemed of great importance by them.

It was in catching my uncle's eye and following it, that I first became aware of the proximity of that dreaded *something*. Children do not take in a whole room at a glance ; but it is only by slow degrees that

even an observant one becomes acquainted with each and every article or occupant.

This *something* was, from that moment, an awful reality to me. It was death ; it was murder ; it was cruelty and misery ! And I alone, of all in that room, had witnessed this horror. It lay there motionless, covered with a white sheet—that was Miss Earl !

I wondered if the black hair would be dishevelled, the stream of blood flowing, and the moonlight sheen be tinging the head with silver, when the sheet was uncovered. My curiosity was now excited and superseded my fear. It was this that made me calm enough to answer the important questions put to me clearly, and with sufficient decision and promptness to establish a certainty to the jury men that an open verdict was the only one that could be justly found.

There was much said which I could not

understand, but the preliminary recapitulation of all the circumstances of the murder made me shudder ; and my Uncle Osmyth, who was sitting with one arm resting on a table, and the hand against his forehead shading his eyes, then roused himself to look pityingly at me, and moved his arm as if about to draw me towards him. I felt grateful for this symptom of interest, and would have responded to the movement had not Dr Angus restrained me. It had struck me as being strange that my uncle had not asked to see me before ; but I know now that, on his first arrival at Dalrymple, there were many things to take his attention, and that I was at that time in no high favour with him, though he had never yet seen me.

It was a long time before I knew what had occasioned this incipient dislike, which, luckily for me, was as evanescent as it appeared to be unnatural. How-

ever, from the night of the murder his sympathy was enlisted for the lonely child who had experienced such a fearful shock; and, had prudence permitted him, I should have at once received his notice, and have enjoyed that acquaintanceship and intercourse with him which has ever since been a source of pleasure and contentment to me.

My cross-questioning now began by the coroner asking me my age. I was then cautioned to speak the truth, and that only, and a Bible was given me, to kiss, I suppose, but that observance was not enforced; but I imagine that it was thought that holding the book would be the means of impressing me with the solemnity of the occasion and the importance of my veracity. I know that I was relieved from all but necessary questions, on account of my youth and sickly appearance, by the

intercession of several of the gentlemen.

I was not compelled to look at the body, but they asked me to state what I could remember as having happened on that dreadful night, which I at once did in a few words.

“I went to bed very sad and afraid, because something was to take place when I awoke. I was to be a chief mourner, Miss Earl said.”

Here my tears flowed freely, and I paused to recollect myself, the coroner encouragingly saying,—

“Very good, my little fellow. Go on, and tell all that followed.”

“I was frightened when I awoke in the middle of the night, and sat up in bed to call to Miss Earl. It was light in the room, because the moon was bright. I did not call out, because she was sitting up in bed,—her hair looked so black and

long, except one side, which was almost like silver. She was looking at something across the room ; but a man came to the bedside, and—and— ”

Sobs here prevented my utterance, and a voice said soothingly,—

“ Take time, my poor boy, till you are better.”

I made a desperate effort to continue.

“ I—I—don’t know what he did. I saw a bright thing, like a large knife, and then Miss Earl dropped back to the pillow, and there was red all over the bed, like blood.”

Here my feelings became quite beyond control, as had been frequently the case during the description.

Again overcoming my emotion, I said,—

“ I felt a man’s hand on my mouth ; but I did not look at him, only I said to myself, ‘ Our Father.’ And then some one must have carried me to Mrs Mayne’s room, as I found myself there next.”

"Poor little fellow," said a jurymen.
"He must have lain unconsciously in the room, with the murdered lady, till the servant went to call her in the morning, and found her dead."

And now the questioning began, after this manner:—

"What was Miss Earl looking at when you first saw her?"

"I don't know, unless it was at the chest of drawers in the corner."

"Did the man come from there?"

"No; from the other side of the bed."

"Did he walk from one side to the other?"

"No; I only saw him on one side."

"Not the side where the chest of drawers stood?"

"No!"

"What was there, in the way of furniture, on the side of the room where you saw the man?"

“Only a chair and”—said thoughtfully, with some enlightenment in my mind as to the importance of facts—“the door.”

“Good, my boy ; quite right ! Was the man in light or dark clothes ? ”

“Black, I think.”

I noticed now the gentlemen looking at each other curiously ; but the next question and answer went badly for the clue, I fancy, as less excitement was perceptible on the various countenances.

“Was the man tall ? Tall as—not according to your own size, my little fellow—as tall, say, as”—his eyes turned towards my uncle, suggesting him in imagination, but the words spoken were—“your grandfather ? ”

“The man was not tall like grandpapa ; he was—like Mr Hawley.”

This was an inspiration which came to me after looking round the room. Mr Hawley was our rector, and the gentlemen looked amused, and said,—

“You will have to establish an ‘alibi,’ Mr Hawley.”

The rector himself was slightly disconcerted, but the coroner asked me,—

“Do you mean that the man was absolutely like Mr Hawley—that his hair was turning grey?”

“No!” I interrupted, rather indignantly. “The man had black hair—not as black as Miss Earl’s,”—I shivered involuntarily in mentioning her,—“but dark coloured—not white. I mean he was little, and about as stout as Mr Hawley.”

“Was his hair brown like your own?”

“Yes, but lighter than mine.”

“Was it the same man who put his hand on your mouth?”

“I don’t know.”

“Did you see him move from the bed?”

“I saw nothing afterwards but the blood on the bed.”

“Did you hear nothing?”

"Yes, something moving by my side."

"Did you not look?"

"I couldn't—I was so stiff—I couldn't move."

"Did you not speak?"

"To God! But my tongue was stiff too."

"From the time of your grandfather's death till the murder, had you seen your Uncle Osmyth?"

"No; I had never seen him in my life till I came in this room."

"Do you know which is he now?"

"The one next to Dr Angus."

"How do you recognise him, if you have never seen him before?"

"Because he is so like grandpapa, and I knew Uncle Osmyth would be here, and he is the only one that could be Uncle Osmyth."


"A child's reason, gentlemen, but good as regards evidence," said the coroner.

“This is the only witness that we can bring forward, and it is well for us that the boy made his statement so clearly and sensibly ; it makes our duty plainer, gentlemen, and it is only to be regretted that so far there is no clue by which to discover and bring to justice the perpetrator of this dastardly crime. A lady, young, handsome, and well connected, was cruelly assassinated in the dead of night. While such villains live, gentlemen, our homes and our daughters are in peril. That plunder was not his object is apparent, as no robbery was committed, notwithstanding the time and opportunity that was afforded to the murderer. We have medical evidence to show that the murdered lady had been dead some hours before the discovery was made. That a dagger of foreign workmanship was used and left on the spot we know, and this circumstance will prevent any recognition of the pur-

chaser by an English shopkeeper, so that chance only can give us any clue to the former possessor of the dagger. It is to be regretted that the use of a foreign blade should have led to unworthy suspicion of an innocent gentleman—one who has suffered most painfully in this calamity, bound as he was to the unfortunate lady by the ties of relationship and of affection of a more tender nature. His honour is much wounded in the fact that has come to light through the medical examination—the fact, gentlemen, that leaves no doubt that a previous intimate and immoral connection existed between the lady and her murderer. To screen himself possibly the deed was done. It will do no good—will not further the object we have of discovering the assassin—to dwell upon misplaced affection, wronged honour, nor to desecrate the dead by imputing the unworthy motive

for her deception of shielding her own name at the expense of that of another ; but this I do say — and here I know, gentlemen, we all cordially agree — that Mr Osmyth Dalrymple has been, and is an injured gentleman, subject to damaging conjectures, while himself suffering most keenly, being wounded alike in his affection and his honour ; and an Englishman can experience no greater sorrow than that which arises from such causes. There is a general supposition that the villain gained access to the room from the window. The large beech tree adjacent being climbed, to spring to the balcony would not be difficult, and might be done with little noise by an expert and agile climber. That the man may have had previous practice to assist his exploit, we may imagine ; but, at all events, we feel sure that his last visit surprised the inmate of the room ; that it was unex-

pected, and was deliberately planned to consummate a crime. Having gained the room by such means, the exit was as easy. The friendly arms of the giant tree were still outspread, and if a little natural tremor might retard and embarrass this practised expert, so that a mischance occurred by the way, the grass beneath would not receive him ungently. There would be nothing remarkably adventurous about the whole achievement; for you will have observed, gentlemen, that the bedroom of Miss Earl was in the west wing, and some twenty steps, or a few more, from the entrance-hall, will lead us to the landing from which the bedroom is approached. There are no footmarks on the grass, gentlemen; but it is in firm condition, after so much dry weather, and the man would scarcely come rough-shod to try his hand at murder. The window left open also makes his mode of egress seem less



than doubtful. Of all that sleeping household, worn out with grief and sadness, who was there waking to admit the cold air to curdle the blood, the chill wind to disturb the raven locks of the quiet dead, except her murderer? We leave, gentlemen, an open verdict of murder against some person or persons unknown."





CHAPTER III.

UNCLE OSMYTH—HIS AND MY FUTURE CONSIDERED.

UNCLE OSMYTH did not stay long after this at Dalrymple Hall. Probably his free life abroad had unfitted him for an English country home ; and it was little wonder, under the circumstances, that the place was distasteful to him.

During the time that he was obliged to remain there to make necessary business arrangements, I was his constant companion. He seemed to dislike solitude, and that he took a great and peculiar in-

terest in me was evident to all. I say peculiar, because, as a rule, young men regard children as domestic evils, and are less tolerant to them than to their dogs and horses. But my Uncle Osmyth was determined to make my life as happy as he could. He took great pains to teach me riding, and I was even allowed to be with him when he went shooting or fishing; and so I early imbibed a taste for these amusements, as I did also for anything of which my uncle approved.

I had been very unused to consideration, and he was so good-tempered and affable that, although he was the object of my boyish worship, I adopted a kind of patronage towards him, which must have been very ridiculous to an onlooker. It became my habit to make propositions for our mutual amusement, as I thought, whereas my good uncle was sacrificing his own to mine. I was so conceited, that it was

a great shock to me when I overheard a gentleman discussing my future with my uncle in the following disrespectful manner :—

“What do you mean to do with that insufferable cub, Dalrymple, when you leave this?”

My uncle laughed, and said,—

“He is an unbroken little colt, sure enough.”

This was too much for me. The first remark was an indignity; the second wounded me to my heart’s core, kindly though it was said.

“It will never do to leave him here,” continued the first speaker, “and you cannot have him in London. Besides, the boy must be educated; and, Dalrymple, the fact is, my dear fellow, you are making a thorough ass of him.”

The speaker was my uncle’s lawyer; and as he knew more about me than any-

one else, except my uncle, no doubt he had a right to give an opinion about me.

"I suppose he is graduating for a muff at this rate," said my uncle, "but these are early days for him. No," he added ponderingly, "the poor little chap cannot be with me in London, as he must be set on with his arithmetic and Latin forthwith, for he has had no instruction, except from Miss Earl, and I have not much reliance upon what a woman can do for a boy in the way of education. Do you know, I think Hawley would undertake to ground him? If he will take him in hand for a year or two, he will then be ready for Harrow or Eton."

"But, my dear sir," interrupted Mr Sims, "your late father's legacy does not warrant such a liberal education for the boy. Three thousand pounds will scarcely afford an income for that."

"Bother the three thousand pounds!

What has that to do with it?" said my uncle. "The boy is mine, I tell you. He is to be my heir, and his expenses must be regulated accordingly."

The lawyer smiled as he said,—

"All very well now, my dear sir; but in a couple of years you will think differently. You will recover your spirits, fall in love, marry, and reduce the boy's prospects to the original three thousand pounds."

"Nothing of the sort, Sims," replied my uncle. "The boy is and shall be my heir—he and none other. I have said it, once for all."

"I beg your pardon, Dalrymple, if I have vexed you by my suggestion. It is a natural one, as most men get over these things in time."

"It is all right, my dear fellow," said my uncle, with his usual good-humour. "You do not know how impossible the

thing is ; how unlikely, I mean. I have seen enough of women — they are a pack of fools. Do not give it out to the world that I am wearing the willow — that is all nonsense ! My love-sick days are over long since, and though the marriage with Miss Earl was undoubtedly arranged, any love on my part had long ceased to exist. It would have been the old tale,” he added, with a gloomy smile, “ ‘ bound by the ring ’ only, had it ever come off at all. But, for goodness’ sake, cease to regard me as a man of blighted affections. I am very grieved and shocked, but, believe me, if the poor creature had lived, and married her favoured swain, I should have been their best friend. It is an idea that I can hardly yet realise—I mean her dishonour—she was so prudent, that it is utterly inconsistent with her character. And to take me in so,” he added moodily, “ pre-

tending her whole happiness depended upon me. Good sake alive! Who can rave about women's virtues, when they will barter their hand for gold, and their honour for love?"

I have quoted this conversation to show the views of my uncle concerning me, and I must now assert that, from my future knowledge of him, and his conduct towards the fair sex generally, this low estimate of them was not deliberately formed and held, but one born of disappointment and vexation, and which died away in association with the next good and pure woman he met. And again I must acknowledge that it was only the drift of the conversation, and a certain style of it, that my boyish mind grasped; and that it has been filled up at will—though, to the best of my knowledge, it is in effect the same. So also as regards the inquest; but, in

reference to this, I have been fortunate enough to see the notes of one of the jurymen.

The outcome of this conversation was an arrangement made with Mr Hawley, our rector, to take me into his house as boarder, to prepare me, by his tuition, for a public school.

When my uncle left Dalrymple, I was accordingly placed there, and fortunately for me there was another boy boarder, older than myself, who not only gave interest to my studies, but was the means of reducing my self-importance to a more agreeable and consistent degree. Otherwise my life at school might have begun more ignominiously.

The rector had a little daughter of my own age, who divided her coquetries pretty equally between us two boys; though I am inclined to think that my pony gave me an unfair advantage over

Nesbit, as the little lady would make many overtures to the master for the pony's sake. My life here was happy enough, the monotony of school routine thus broken by innocent rivalry and flirtation. There came a period, not long afterwards, in which I remembered this only to scorn my happiness—when I was too insufferable a coxcomb to properly appreciate the fair sex; but, luckily for me, this period of hobbledehoy importance wore off, and I returned in mature age to my first love. I am speaking here of the sentiment in a general rather than a particular sense.

Perhaps it would be scarcely fair to this little coquette to omit a description of her as she appeared to me then. She was a slight, graceful child, full of life and spirits; so mischievous as even to provoke *our* wrath at times; but so tearful and pleading and coaxing in her

repentance that our anger could not last—neither, I am bound to say, did her repentance, as her trickery would be set in play almost before the tears were dried; and she would tease by pretending to be desperately interested in one's comrade, before one was quite ready to dispense with the affection she had displayed in her sweet humility. This child had fair curly hair, and soft blue eyes, with a bright sunny smile. She was all life and energy, ready to join the boys at any frolic, from getting up early in the morning to climb a tree and rob a bird's nest of the favourite eggs before the good, kindly rector was there to enforce mercy, to pinning up the same worthy man's surplice on Saturday night in the vestry, and so causing him either to enter the reading-desk to the amusement of the parish, or delaying him till he was late for his duties—both of which

consequences were a source of great discomfort to the rector.

I was so little alone and so well occupied—if we except these childish follies and pranks—that I had little time to brood over the past, even if it were consistent with the volatility of a child's mind to do so.

But the past had its influence over me, and made me less buoyant and reckless than I might have been by nature. And I remember the sleeping and the waking—both were always unpleasant to me. I went to bed with a sorry heart, without reasoning about the cause of it; and I always awoke with a sensation of fear—it would be almost too strong a word to call it horror, but the fear was like a suppressed shudder.

I never mentioned this to any one at the time—it was so natural a feeling, that it did not seem a peculiar one to me. When I grew older the cause was apparent to me; and the effect, though weakened with time,

has remained—also a readiness to awake with the slightest noise, which has inconvenienced me often in hotels and noisy localities, and which has troubled others for me in sickness, as it has showed itself to be a prominent nervous malady in my want of strength, and made me a restless and irritable invalid.





CHAPTER IV.

FROM YOUTH TO MANHOOD.

MY school life passed with little incident. It was much like that of other boys—the usual effort being needed to do a boy's duty well to those in authority at school and at home, without diminishing his prestige as a boy amongst boys ; to be diligent without being a prig, and to be a thorough all-round boy at games and larks, without condescending to the meanness of gaining popularity at the expense of principle. This is a fight, and a hard fight ; for school life is that of a

small world, and a very important one to every member of it at the time.

I was not a favourite at the first ; but I worked my way on, by putting up with a few difficulties to start with, and in the end I was popular enough.

Out of all the boys, my great chum was said to be Tom Chance ; and though many others stood well with me, I can see a fitness in this selection ; for, whereas I was serious and solemn, he was merry and volatile, and acted upon my dull nature like quicksilver ; and, as a reciprocal advantage, my soberer humour steadied him, and fixed him to a purpose. He was said to be fickle, but I have proved him to be the most constant of friends ; and, though he was slandered to me by other boys, who asserted that his constancy only depended upon my own, and the benefits that accrued to him from that—as poor Tom often wanted a friend to help him out of his troubles—still I knew him

best, and probably at his best ; and I can therefore confidently assert that his nature, though versatile, was genuine.

We both left Eton the same year, and parted, so far as constant companionship is concerned, for ever ; and I confess to having felt the weakness, or strength, of an uncomfortable sensation in some, or less, of the unknown inner organs whence such issue. He began at once the study of medicine ; while I ended all study, except that of human nature.

My uncle had purposed giving me a year or two at college ; but he had led so lonely a home life that he seemed to highly appreciate my company ; and, upon my own declaration that, "so far as I was concerned, further scholastic application was only a necessary evil, and that I should not regret on my own account if all the colleges were extinct," he coincided with my own ideas on the subject,

and asserted that "for a gentleman I was sufficiently and highly educated;" wasting a breath of pity on the "poor wretches who were obliged to grind their heads against the post of knowledge"—a simile appropriate enough, from our point of view, so dense, stiff, and formidable did the whole galaxy of the sciences appear to us both.

Now, I had no doubt in my own mind of my own inability to benefit greatly by a college experience, but I had a great wish to lead a practically useful life. I had never forgotten what had passed between my uncle and his lawyer, in which conversation the latter expressed his belief that my uncle would marry; and now that I was to all intents and purposes a man, though but just from school, I saw the necessity of being able to earn my own living.

In my opinion, my uncle was, with

out exception, the most agreeable of men. I could not comprehend why he did not yield to the accumulated fascinations of the fair sex, so to speak; for, though one individual, were she fair as Eve, could not reasonably be expected to pluralise the attractions of the whole sex, still so many fair eyes were bent admiringly on my uncle in society, so many virtuous dowagers smiled benignly upon him on behalf of their daughters, and so many admirable paterfamilias were profuse with their social civilities, that I could not possibly imagine why the recipient of it all was so stoically indifferent.

I was of an age to admire lovely eyes that looked love at me; I was in an agony to accept myself such shafts from Cupid's bow. I was, in fact, a love-sick boy in search of an object for my devotion, and I envied my uncle of his calmer nature.

I found that in society, as at school, I had to earn favour; and I was soon disheartened by my failure. I saw by this circumstance that I had an eligible uncle between myself and fortune. This I cared little for, as I was too fond of the obstacle.

But I hated the knowledge that came to me of the worldliness of the sex that I adored. I made the resolve that work should be my mistress. I would shut my eyes to the allurements of beauty, and my mind to the dreams of gratified fancy. I would win my own success in life; and, being successful, brilliant, rich, and—oh, ye castles in the air!—still young,—being thus, I would be so difficult to please, that, daughters of society, your day would be over for me. An unsophisticated, pure, artless maiden, fair as a poet's dream,—this—this should satisfy the successful ord of creation, who had kicked the

ball of fortune before him. I might join Tom Chance as a medical student; but I must confess to being ignorant of the way in which any gigantic acme of prosperity could thus be reached. No! In soberer thought the Elysian fields were ever distant. But, anyhow, I would be practical and independent..

My uncle seemed so hurt at this idea, and upon gaining my confidence, as he had a trick of doing, made such ridicule of my notions concerning his own likelihood of marrying, that I was obliged to yield my own wishes; though, at this time, any real work would have been good for me, and pleasant.

My uncle was always so gay and full of spirits, that I was touched to see him fall into a melancholy train of thought after this conversation. Presently he roused himself, and said, with a sigh,—

“Old memories are worse than useless—they make me moody, boy. Ah! but it is a sweet memory. Sweeter, mayhap, lying there, under the green turf, than it would have been in living presence. It was a crushed flower, Yorke; and though I would make amends, if it might be now—who knows whether I should have been as honourable had she lived? Difficulties, boy! Difficulties! Sadness for her! Exile for me, on her account! It is best as it is. Her memory is dearer to me than any living woman, Yorke. Had I not wronged an angel, I should be less bound to keep her place in my heart sacred to one. I shall never marry; so do not leave me, Yorke; and try and forget that your uncle is such a sinner. Heigh-ho! we should be at the opera by this time; I promised to see that charming little Eva Lee there this evening. Social

duties are stringent, Yorke ; so now for the world, and to act the gay bachelor ! Don't look so sympathetic, boy, or I shall think you are going to take up the *rôle* of the skeleton in the cupboard, and haunt me with unmerciful eyes at home and abroad. I wonder how many private sentimental outpourings you will be doomed to hear, Yorke, before you die. You are just the fellow for people to trust ; and you are as tender as a woman in your feelings. You will harden as you get more world-weary. And you must remember that, with a man, sentiment is only one side of life—it creeps in at times, but we live, for the most part, without it. And a confounded good thing that is ; for, upon my word, the softer emotions are not in my best accord. Too womanish and excruciating—quite the thing for extraordinary and rare occasions. Always take care to leave sen-

timent at home, Yorke ; we come out to amuse and be amused."

The next few years of my life were uneventful, and spent as they were about town, for the most part very purposeless, useless, and unnatural. I say unnatural, from my firm conviction that all young men have a working instinct, which, being undeveloped, worries them in the form of ennui, discontent, or, in more mournful cases, vice. Excitement in some form is essential to youth, and it is well when occupation, healthful, satisfying, and congenial, prevents this natural energy being spent or wasted in lawless licence.

It becomes easier, less irksome and less dangerous, to lead an idle life in the course of years. And so I found time less heavy upon my hands, and running along smoothly and pleasantly after this period of unrest.

Without being a student, books had

always the charm of real companionship for me, and were, I believe, the most efficacious remedy for that restlessness which all must feel who reach manhood under the unfavourable conditions of idleness, inability to work, or a position where real work is pursued only from the dictates of personal inclination, and when the zest that necessity gives—the heartfelt anxiety for the result of it—is unknown.





CHAPTER V.

TRAVELLING COMPANIONS.

MY uncle was now a confirmed idler. This may seem a strong and censorious title, but a true one, as he left even the care of his estate to other hands, and troubled himself about nothing but his own expenditure. This I know was heavy, and that often his receipts were insufficient for his requirements.

He would then travel for a time to retrench; and, together, we roamed through many of the European countries in the cheapest and most Bohemian style. The

zeal with which he applied himself to pedestrian exertions, and faced all the difficulties that travellers in remote districts contend with, surprised me; his sturdy disregard of personal discomforts, his cheerful endurance of slovenly accommodation, coarse food, and, above all, bad weather, excited my envy and emulation.

It was amusing to see the free and easy style of welcome which his manner invited from the country people. Every one felt at home with him, and made much of him, in their own primitive fashion, with no suspicion that a different style of entertainment could be more suitable. All talked to him in their vernacular, with no knowledge of his possible amusement at their expense.

I saw him now as he was—a genial, hearty Englishman—an undoubted gentleman, with something added thereto—a largeness of heart which could comprehend nature as it existed in wild and rugged

paths—a refinement too true to discover unfitness in any of God's creatures, in their natural, though lowly condition of life. Incongruity might be painful to behold; but there, among their own native mountains or valleys, amid picturesque but rugged scenery, how thoroughly he found the inhabitants in harmony with the grand majestic whole, his companionship with them testified.

I had always admired him, but during our travels I attained to a higher appreciation and comprehension of him.

I understood now why he was such an universal favourite. His cheerfulness, his tact, and his quickness to adapt himself to people and circumstances, were the cause of such an influence over his fellows as few men possess. His virtues might be but negative; his mind might not be fruitful; his rightful duties might be set aside, and casual opportunities for doing

good be only seized capriciously; his motive might be purposeless, or non-existent; his morality might not be faultless; but for all that, he could hold his little world spellbound at his will—when he waved his magic wand, that charm of manner and temperament.

I confess that it was well that he was too indolent, or too unsuspicious of his power, to attempt to mould others. For he had grave faults, as which of us has not? And, alas! how seldom they “lean to virtue’s side.”

I saw him stand dejected and sad at a grave, and I read thereon the single word “Nina,” and the history of that lonely grave rested with himself and God.

It was situated in a romantic region, consisting of a level plain of some extent, bounded by a fantastic mountain range, whose rugged, cold, grey peaks seemed to

defy the elements, and uplifted themselves to heaven, in the majestic dignity of undisturbed repose. They seemed to assert themselves, and awe the spectator, as he imagined what mighty strife of nature must some time have caused the disruption of the various members from their mother mountain, and had disposed them, by chaotic method, in multifarious forms, though each still retained those family features of hardness of substance, and coldness of colour—so cold as almost to detract from the beauty of the mountain range, but not quite. For did not the brain conceive the most grotesque models, while the eye gazed upon the well-defined columns and pinnacles, showing out between and behind each other, like impregnable castles, and pyramids, whose incredible height denied themselves, ere the likeness was created?

Upon a nearer view, precipices disclosed

themselves, wherein the snow lodged, as it did in every part favourable to its retention. The peculiar pointed shape of most of the peaks dislodged the snow, as if declining its warm garb, or preferring to pierce with sleepless, eagle eyes, into the wonders of the sky and clouds—even into the very purpose of the Mighty Creator.

In front of the table-lands, there was a vast extent of pinewood, which sloped gradually downwards into the valley beneath, and through which the road leading to the outer world was visible. Gazing towards this, one was brought back to earth when the sublime emotions, which these mighty spectres of stone had excited, were too oppressive.

I could imagine how the scenery would mould the character of those hardy mountaineers, who were full of bravery and heroism with that love of country, which

craved its freedom from the hated stranger ; for at this time the Venetians were ripe for rebellion against the yoke of Austria.


I could understand the cry for freedom as it came forth from a district, the mountains of which formed a natural boundary against northern Europe. I could imagine a woman born and bred here, whose heroism might be displayed in home life ; a woman who might exalt an individual into a hero, and find sacrifice for his sake easy ; a woman, simple, trustful, true-hearted, noble-spirited, though perhaps rude in speech and rustic in manner.

I could fancy how such an one might charm the heart and the imagination here, being quite in harmony with the place ; and I could conceive how some simple form of betrothal, and a badly-kept promise, might have deluded even such a noble creature as this. That Nina was a heroine I did not doubt, or the remembrance of her

would scarcely have been so honoured by my uncle.

In thinking of her in connection with him, did my uncle become less to me than the demigod whom I had worshipped formerly with a boy's enthusiasm? The question needs no answer, as, according to the poet, we can only "love perfection when we see it." But I know that my affection for him remained unchanged through life.

It passed through my mind, even then, to wonder why he still wandered lonely through life, with no home ties—no softening influence of woman's presence to cheer that loneliness; but I believe he never missed such companionship; or otherwise, with his self-indulgent habits, sorrow, remorse, or the impossibility of loving again, would never have been sentimentally obtruded between him and happiness. I am inclined to think that his liberty was



precious, his bachelorhood congenial, and that the remembrance of that buried love softened his nature, even as the thought of an absent but living wife or family will soothe the spirit of a weary traveller far distant from that happy influence.

When my uncle suddenly made known to me his resolve to return immediately to England, and to take up his residence at Dalrymple Hall, I was naturally much surprised. During all these years that we had lived together, and talked about nearly everything and everybody, one subject was never brought under discussion.

And yet I know it often occupied our thoughts ; it did mine. Dalrymple, and my early associates, and the tragedy I had witnessed there, were to me both a romance and a nightmare ; and I now anticipated a visit there with mingled feelings of awe and pleasure. But the pride of possession was stronger than anything.

It was true I was only the heir presumptive, and therefore in a doubtful position as regards succession; but this grand old inheritance was dear to me, and, being unseen since the days of my boyhood, it was somewhat of a *chateau en espagne*—so much did imagination blend its ethereal visions with the reality of the place, and so much did the memory borrowed from my childhood magnify all its magnificence.

It was a cheerless coming home. We had given but a short notice to the house-keeper of our intention, and she had hastily prepared rooms and provisions for the travellers.

My uncle preferred to come back thus,—to surprise his steward, his tenantry, and the few friends he had at Dalrymple. We passed through the village unthought of, unrecognised, and beyond the village, past the church and the rectory, so familiar

to me of old ; and, after a further drive of half-a-mile, we entered our own domain.

I must own to experiencing some disappointment. We were in a hired conveyance, for my uncle's carriages and horses had not arrived ; and the woman at the lodge-gate came lazily out, and, after surveying our vehicle suspiciously and curiously for a minute, opened the gate, which creaked as it turned uneasily on its hinges, from disuse. She put her hand before her eyes as we drove on, and, looking down the road at a following carriage, gave utterance to the short, emphatic sentence, "Goodness save us !" It was ludicrous enough, but we neither of us smiled ; for it was altogether the most melancholy and depressing home-coming that could be.

Everything around us seemed to have been growing old or standing still, both in the house and outside of it, and even in the village ; for the obvious reason,

that progress ought to have found its exponent in a resident and enterprising lord of the manor.

“What custom wills, in all things should we do’t ;
The dust on antique time would lie unswept.”

We dined with little appetite, and went to bed dull. There was a cloud on my uncle’s face ; for, though his cheerfulness had been so unfailing hitherto, it did not stand the test of Dalrymple and its memories.

I resolved to improve matters in the morning, and as I awoke earlier than usual, I dressed myself and sallied forth into the village and to the rectory, knowing that my quondam tutor and most worthy friend was an early riser.

He was in his garden, “spectacles on nose,” looking scientifically and minutely at the gossamer webs, which spread their fibrous network from leaf to leaf, ’mid

never-ending leaves. He was less changed than time would warrant; his face was fresh from contact with the morning air; his figure was a little bent, and his forehead seemed to be more expansive, from the baldness of his head. He looked civilly at me, bowed stiffly in answer to my salutation, and waited for my apologies for this early intrusion.

I gave him my card, and received, in exchange, such a hand-shaking, such a grip of affection, such a gaze of curiosity, interest, and I own modestly, admiration, that I felt a little shame-faced.

Just then there issued a silvery volume of sound from the open door, a girl's voice singing, and a girl's form tripped lightly out into the morning sunlight. It stopped at the sight of me, and I underwent a similar scrutiny to that which the rector had given me, except that in this case curiosity was evidently the prompting sentiment.

“ Good-morning, papa ! You have a visitor ; I did not know. I beg pardon.”

She said this, looking prettily modest, from under her eyebrows, at me.

“ Not at all, my dear. Come here ! This is your old playmate, Yorke Maxwell. I confess it would puzzle more eyes than yours to see the likeness to that young scamp in this highly polished gentleman.”

“ Pray stop, Mr Hawley,” I said ; “ I cannot stand compliments. But I can easily recognise my old playfellow in Miss Hawley, and I am quite willing to renew the old bond of fellowship forthwith. You are not much altered, Miss Hawley.”

“ Call me Adèle !” she said, smiling pleasantly.

“ Well, Adèle,” I continued, much emboldened, “ your hair is as golden as ever ; you have the same features, the same smile, and you look just as ready and able to tease me as ever. There is no difference,

except a few important inches added to your tiny height."

"A few!" she exclaimed, pouting prettily. "I am as tall as mamma, in my walking shoes. I am not short at all!"

"A perfect dwarf, Adèle!" said her father jokingly. "Your boots must be all heels, if they raise you to the height of your aspirations. Come in, children!"

And so, falling into the home life of the rectory once more, I followed Adèle and Mr Hawley into the breakfast-room, as if treading on air—a few kindly words the source of vigour and elasticity.

The spoiled daughter of the rector was a charming girl, and no young man can be indifferent to a beautiful and fresh feminine presence. What wonder, then, that I should be rapt in admiration, and find the reminiscences of childhood from her lips a sweeter morsel than the viands on the table? I ate little, but took in all her movements,

and the indescribable feminine tricks of voice and manner by which the sweet girl charmed the masculine world. If I mistook art for nature, what matter? For the present I was in the seventh heaven, with my adorable divinity.

I had scarcely the common politeness to address my conversation impartially. I found myself constantly recollecting that the rector and his wife were present. I would willingly have remained silent, to listen and watch; but my uncle had early taught me the lesson of society, that sentiment was only for quiet hours; and I did my best to be generally agreeable, and succeeded. I described the dreariness of the previous evening, and implored the rector to come with me back to the hall, that my uncle might be cheered, as I had been, with his welcome.


“Certainly, Yorke, I need no persuasions, my dear boy; it is a duty to pay my re-

spects at the earliest opportunity. I should have been calling later in the day. But I will go with you now, and"—answering my longing glance—"Adèle will come too. I am quite sorry for Mr Dalrymple; so many disagreeable events must be recalled on his first return home, after so many years' absence. But that feeling will pass off, and I think it would have been wise to have come back to the old place earlier, and have tried to overcome the gloom of old associations."

Mr Hawley was evidently of the opinion that my uncle's absence had been but half voluntary; that he would have preferred this quiet home life, except for the melancholy inseparable from it. I did not undeceive him; but I knew that up to this time my uncle had not experienced any home longings, and that probably now his visit might terminate as suddenly as it had been planned.

To describe my uncle in the character of host is unnecessary; it was a duty that always sat gracefully upon him, and one especially congenial to his temperament. He too seemed to admire Adèle; or, perhaps, it only appeared to me that he was more struck with her beauty than that of any other girl whom I had seen him with, because we had been away from England, and her style was new to him as well as to myself. A pretty English girl, well bred and educated, shining in the obscurity of a country parsonage, is by no means a peculiar circumstance, but one to which we were both unused.

Adèle seemed to find so much to admire in the old house, in its dingy stateliness, that both of us were delighted, and began to agree with her opinion of it. And possibly we were afraid that without her presence we should regain our own first impressions of its gloominess.



At all events, we both pleaded so hard for a repetition of the visit, and dwelt upon our own dulness so pathetically, that the good-natured rector, whom habit had made too well satisfied with his own quiet parsonage to relish the change, promised to bring his wife and daughter to spend a week with us, to help to fill up the "nooks and crevices" of the Hall, as he not inaptly expressed it; "and to try and dispel all unpleasant memories," he added, thoughtfully and kindly.

After he had left I pondered on his words, and doubted his capability to deal with such memories as haunted my brain; and I could see from my uncle's face that, in some degree, he shared my melancholy imagination.

Finding that I could not dispossess myself of these feelings, I determined to face the evil, by getting at all the known facts concerning Miss Earl's murder. I was sure

that a hand-to-hand struggle with reality was healthier than to allow a ghostly creation to haunt my waking and sleeping hours.

Accordingly I appealed to the rector and the housekeeper for information; and I also obtained opinions from extraneous sources—from the more unprejudiced judgment, as I thought, of outsiders. But I found that amongst the tenantry, as a rule, a prejudice did exist, that old and ever increasing one of class against class. There was a readiness to believe in criminality in high places; and, from obscure hints, I gathered that the cruel suspicion which had attached to my uncle in reference to the murder, neither reason nor time could allay, so far as this then ignorant and superstitious country people were concerned.

The rector and the housekeeper were true as steel in upholding the honour of

the old family name, freely exonerating my uncle from any share in the catastrophe, and sympathising thoroughly with him in the misfortune of having placed his affections upon a lady so unworthy and untrue. Whatever they may have thought at the time of the depth of his attachment to Miss Earl, his long bachelorhood had rendered the truth of it no longer doubtful.

“The mystery will never be cleared up now,” said the rector, “though they say ‘Murder will out.’ If it should please Divine Providence to bring this foul and cruel one to light, I for one shall return hearty thanks for His mercy. But there is no clue, and the murderer may have been in our very midst for all these years, with nothing but a guilty conscience to distinguish him from his fellows.”

This did not seem very probable to me, as, had Miss Earl associated herself so

intimately with any one near home, there would most likely have been some evidence forthcoming about it.

Upon reading over the account of the inquest, which Mr Hawley supplied me with, I was struck with my own description of the murderer—his height and figure were in striking opposition to those of my uncle; but I gathered that the coroner and jurymen had further corroboration of his innocence in the condition of the lady herself, which established a certainty of her connection with some one unknown, even at the time when my uncle, her promised husband, was away from England.

I visited the room once occupied by the murdered lady, which was now kept constantly locked. I unbarred the shutters and looked out, to judge for myself of the probability of the murderer having made the window his mode of egress.

There was a balcony in the front of the window, with a low stone balustrade ; and the noble beech tree waved its branches over the balcony till, in its present luxuriant growth, it caressed the very window-panes. Yes ; the murderer might have sprung from the balustrade, catching hold of the tree in his descent, and have let himself safely down from there ; he might also have climbed the tree, and so have gained entrance by the window ; but then we must suppose the window to be unfastened, as it might have been. Still there was the contrary possibility, and it troubled me, as an uncertainty is apt to do when the mind craves facts.

I pictured to myself Miss Earl in her bed, gazing with her last power of vision upon a chest of drawers in one corner. Did she wish to guard some cherished secret contained therein from the intruder, whom she might fear was venturing on

a burglarious errand? Notwithstanding all the suppositions which had been formed from the medical testimony as to her own condition, this man might have been a stranger to Miss Earl. He might have been a common thief; but, if so, he did not accomplish his purpose, as the drawers were not ransacked, and, moreover, so far as I could gather, nothing more important was found therein than the usual necessities of a woman's toilet.

I had gained no further knowledge from my visit to the scene of the murder, but I had conceived a curious fancy that the murderer had not entered that room by the window. I had said in my evidence that the villain had made his attack upon the lady from that side of the bed adjacent to the door; the window was on the opposite side of the bed; the door into my room was immediately in front

of the bed. There seemed to me a probability that the murderer had entered the room by the door which opened on to the landing.





CHAPTER VI.

DAY DREAMS AND NIGHT VISIONS.

FOR some time after this I thought little about Miss Earl's murder. Not that I was less interested in the subject, but I was more absorbingly engrossed in making, or rather playing at making love to Adèle Hawley. It was very real to me then, but at this lapse of time I regard it less seriously, and feel ashamed to give utterance to all the beautiful sentiments cast away at a worthless shrine; and therefore I draw a veil over that happy gala time, when the

smile of Adèle rapt my soul in bliss, and her sigh made havoc with my heart, as a whirlwind shakes the very foundations of the forest.

Love's young dream—how fair it is! Never to be dreamed again after the same mad fashion, though the decaying fire of it may be rekindled and burn with a steadier, purer glow. Though ephemeral and feverish, yet how sweet was this first love for Adèle Hawley! And hers for me, I would fain add—and yet what gratification could that afford me now? I doubt my power, or that of any other man, to stir the depths of that fickle, designing, though buoyant and winsome nature. Carrying with her and scattering sunshine with cruel lavishness, she had power to make bright a man's home who was contented without a helpmeet for the higher needs of his nature. Mrs Hawley, good, simple

88 *Day Dreams and Night Visions.*

soul, first opened my eyes to the real character of my idol.

My uncle and Adèle were returning from a long ramble in the twilight, how planned and carried out I did not know; but possibly a woman's wit had devised the means that cheated me of my usual happiness with herself. I had sought her in the drawing-room and elsewhere, for it was the lovers' hour, and one which Adèle had not been slow to recognise as our mutual privilege, as my uncle and Mr Hawley usually lingered long over their wine. But on this evening Adèle had managed to tempt them out, and had also contrived to send the worthy father to a dying parishioner.

I remained talking with Mrs Hawley, having heard her long explanation of the cause of Adèle's absence—how she could not bear that her father should delay his parochial visit to this poor sick man,

and had coaxed him from the dining-room by a promise to walk with him there; and how Mr Dalrymple had been tempted to go out also to enjoy the beauty of the evening, and so on—for good Mrs Hawley prosed on, after the fashion of old ladies, about the sweetness of her daughter's disposition, and the respect that her husband's Christian work in the parish had earned him.

"You are greatly to be envied, Mrs Hawley," I interposed emphatically, and with all good faith so far as the daughter was concerned.

"Yes, indeed, Mr Yorke, I think so. It is a proof of Adèle's good heart and enduring attachments that she remembers you, and has kept a place for you in her affections, after all these years. Many a girl would have forgotten you, instead of being like a sister."

"A sister!" I ejaculated involuntarily,

grinding my foot with impatient but noiseless force into the carpet ; and added to myself, with the restraint of prudence, " Good heavens ! how long am I to listen to such confounded folly ! " My patience was exhausted, and the longing for her sweet company was like a heartache.

But Mrs Hawley's confidences were not ended.

" I don't quite understand Adèle," she continued, " but they say ' true love never runs smooth,' Mr Yorke ; and I am sure, till just now, Adèle and Mr Rivers were as sweet as possible. Adèle seemed as if she could not bear to be out of his company ; in fact, they were together so much, that I was afraid the rector would not approve of it, Mr Rivers being only his curate, you see ; but he is a worthy young man, and not without expectations, for his uncle, the dean, has money, and his influence may get him a good living some-

time. And then when I saw Adèle was so determined, and indeed showing her love almost too openly, I thought—but you will not mention such a thing, Mr Yorke—well then, I remembered my own young days, and decided to let things have their course. But now, since we have been here, the poor young man looks so down-hearted, and Adèle so shy, just passing him with a nod and a cool word of greeting, that I cannot make it all out—and I am really sorry for Mr Rivers; he is so good, that I cannot think he has done or said anything to vex Adèle. And I suppose she must be too exacting; and, in fact, that this is one of Adèle's silly freaks. But I do not like to interfere, you see, because Mr Hawley might not approve of them making a match."

"Exactly," I managed to reply. "You are wisdom itself, Mrs Hawley."

But Mrs Hawley shook her head, and said,

"I do not profess to be wise, but I love young people, and I like them to be happy in their own way."

Apparently Adèle *was* happy in her own way, as we saw her, in the distance, hanging lovingly on my uncle's arm, and listening to what I knew was only the kind of nonsense with which he regaled most women's ears, that were open to receive it. Yes ; as I saw her looking up into his face, with those bewitching, side-long glances, I could swear there was sentiment, or its counterfeit, in her eye, and that her tongue was not slow to second that other powerful though silent language of expression. "Such magic in her eye, and music in her tongue," when I was not the recipient, was simply odious to me.

I had a long moonlight walk in search of peace, but I found none that night, nor for many weary days and nights to follow. Adèle Hawley was playing a high game

for Dalrymple Hall, and the position of lady of the manor, and the sooner its possession was insured the better. Waiting for dead men's shoes was only better than no shoes at all.

I have reason to think that my uncle had, from the first, read this fair maiden's character, and that he played into her hands only to the extent necessary to open my eyes to her deception. On seeing my moodiness and her capricious treatment of me, he continued those attentions to her which distressed me, for my cure and her punishment. But I was in a very unhappy state of mind, and an incident occurred one night which quite unstrung me, and made me seriously doubt whether the step Adèle anticipated taking would really procure her the happiness she expected.

I had noticed, notwithstanding the gaiety with which he received his guests, an un-

94 *Day Dreams and Night Visions.*

usual despondency settling upon my uncle's countenance, and a nervousness and excitability of manner which was unnatural to him. One night when we had stayed up, as usual, later than the rest of the household to smoke, I observed that he was excessively restless. He was unceasingly moving his feet or hands in a spasmodic manner, and starting up, as if to listen. I thought then that some sickness was coming on, and that on the morrow I would speak to him about it and urge him to seek advice, as he was evidently in a low, nervous state of health.

I thought about him after retiring to rest, and also about my own disappointment; and so sleep seemed to linger in its usual gracious visitation, and I lay consciously restless for some time, till finally, in a half-dreaming, half-waking imagination, I heard slow footsteps in the passage outside my door. I listened, will-

ing to believe it a dream, till I heard the creaking of a door-handle.

I was fully awake now, and, hastily putting on some garments, I opened the door cautiously and went out. From the stairs below, on a lower passage, a light was visible; and I presently saw a figure ascending the stairs in a night-gown. I was about to speak, when I recognised my uncle; and as he came slowly up, carrying a light, I noticed that his eyes were half open, and he had such an unconscious air that I immediately suspected him to be in a state of somnambulism. I followed him to his room, saw him put out the light, and go to bed; and leaving him in a profound and apparently peaceful sleep, I went back to my own bed, more than ever confirmed in my opinion that he was out of health in mind and body, and that immediate medical advice was essential.


So, in the morning, I suggested the ad-

visability of his going to town for that purpose. He cheerfully acceded to my wishes, entering with so much alacrity into the project, that I perceived a separation from Adèle was no hardship, and that a departure from this gloomy family mansion was a positive relief to him.

“You are right, Yorke,” he said; “I am a little out of tone. But London and the doctor will set me up.”

So it chanced that our sojourn at Dalrymple was brief. Our guests had finished their visit, and were leaving that day. And they went,—Adèle crestfallen at having lost her chance, but pleasant and bright to the last.

As the night approached, my uncle again showed signs of nervousness; he smoked more and talked less, there being no need to *make* talk for my benefit, and he manifested the utmost disinclination to go to bed.



“I feel as if I should not sleep, Yorke,” he said ; “yet I am tired almost to exhaustion.”

But he listened to my persuasions, and went to bed at least two hours later than usual. I thought, being so tired, he would lie quietly, and I soon slept myself ; but only to be awake as before. However, I knew whose footsteps haunted the passage, and I went out with more assurance and rapidity.

I was in time to follow him down the stairs, and, as previously, he went to the lower passage. I was quite awed when I saw him fit a key into the door of the room where the murder had taken place. He perseveringly overcame the difficulty of unlocking the door, and, hiding the light of the candle with his hand, walked cautiously to the bed, and stood a moment beside it. He then moved towards the chest of drawers, and opened one, which

was empty, save for a single article, and that a relic of the murder : it was the foreign dagger. He took it in his hand, and walked again to the bed, and I almost expected to see it uplifted in a murderous attitude. But no ; a troubled look passed over the sleeping face, and the dagger was laid gently on the coverlet.

He then walked to the adjacent room, stopped there, opposite to the door, and placed his hand out in a warning manner. I saw that he was enacting, in sleep, the disastrous event which had happened there ; and that outstretched hand was held out, no doubt, to prevent a child's voice giving expression to its terror.

I cannot sufficiently impress you with the solemnity and awfulness of this tragic phase of somnambulism. I watched it all with engrossing interest ; and it was not till the play was played out, and my uncle had left the room and ascended the stairs,

in dreamy leisure, that I awoke to a sense of anxiety on *his* account.

After seeing him, as before, safely asleep in bed, I returned to the room, replaced the dagger in the drawer, came quickly out and locked the door, after which I was by no means sorry to perceive that daylight had dawned. I opened my bedroom window and took a breath of air to revive me, and my courage was further increased by the sight of some labourers in the distance, coming to their daily work in the corn-fields. I lay down again and slept soundly.

Upon giving the key to Miss Earl's room to the charge of the housekeeper, she volunteered the remark,—

“Mr Dalrymple got it from me yesterday; he said he was going to have one look at the ‘chamber of horror,’ as he called it, poor gentleman, before leaving. You and he are the only people who have

been there, except a woman once a-year to clean it, since that terrible night."

I could now imagine the cause of my uncle's nervousness, namely, his desire to see the room, set against a natural repugnance to do so. How this worked upon his mind, and how his first attempt to be brave in slumber had been frustrated from want of the key ; how his sleeping imagination had influenced his daily thought, and led to the possession of the key ; how, having it, he still shrank from the ordeal, till his sleeping action accomplished the desire of his heart.

For it seems to me that there is a connection between our night and day dreams, and that the daily actions and resolutions may create the nightly fancies ; for is not the association of ideas unlimited, never ending, and so linked even to our dreams ?

Be it as it may, when away from Dal-

rymple my uncle's nervousness disappeared, and, so far as I can judge, his sleep-walking ended. I cannot tell whether he missed the key, or whether he forgot all about it—as he was often thoughtless about little matters, the latter is not improbable; and that if he again remembered it, he would suppose the key was still left in his bedroom at Dalrymple.

I did not dare to mention the incidents of those two nights to any one, lest an unfair construction might be put upon his actions during sleep; and I did not allude to them to my uncle, dreading a return of his nervous depression and a repetition of his sleep-walking.

I can scarcely describe the impression all this made upon me. I was convinced my childish description of the real murderer was accurate; but I had a vaguely formed suspicion, which was not allowed to develop itself, being regarded by me as little short

of treason to him, that my uncle must at least have been a witness of the murder. And if he had been, why had he withheld such information as he could give about the crime ?





CHAPTER VII.

MORE CHANCES THAN THE NAME OF ONE.

THERE was a quiet little village by the sea, in the north of England, not more than sixty miles distant from Dalrymple, and Tom Chance had got the post of *locum tenens* to a doctor there. A dull place for a bachelor to locate himself; and Tom Chance having found it so, had sent for his old chum, Yorke Maxwell, to bear him company.

It was a quiet spot, but quaint and picturesque. It consisted of one long street, which being wide, and the houses having been built on each side in a compact block,

though mostly differing one from another in architectural character, had a good effect. It was not a street of shops ; but, as you see in most villages, there were, intermixed with these, a number of private residences, varying in respectability, but many of which had accommodation for the few lodgers who were tempted to come there, from the adjacent town and busy centre of industry, for a few weeks' rest in the summer.

There were also poorer houses scattered about, mostly near the sea, and consisting of one front room, which contained invariably a four-post bed, commanding a full view of the door opening to the road, and occupying a good quarter of the full dimensions of the room. This, and a limited extent of back premises beyond, which, so far as I saw, was only an excuse for muddle, completed each cottage.

But outside there was a vast circumference of sea, sky, and land ; and a healthy,

bracing air, which produced a type of manhood keen, cool, calculating, and unexcitable in temperament—large boned, long limbed, and muscular in frame.

It was a rocky coast, and commanded a good extent of ocean ; moreover, there was a fine bay, with a long range of sands ; and a second bay and village beyond, still more antiquated and quaint in appearance than the one described. On the other side of the bay the view was less open, as a rocky promontory intervened between that and a second inlet of the sea ; beyond this there was a bolder, more massive point of lichen-covered rock, on whose broad tableland stood a graceful ruin, which had formerly afforded rest from the world and its vanities to some of the recluses of the earlier ages. There was a little sheltered haven or cove beyond this ; and farther, a grassy elevation overlooking the mouth of a river, and the coast line across it.

Now, in a primitive place like this, with so small a population, one becomes interested in all the people, knowing them by sight; and even if of an unobservant nature, the food of gossip must be partaken of to some extent, if one possesses the hearing ear. But with this, and all the physical beauty of the place to admire, and the professional duties which devolved upon him to take his attention, the place palled upon Tom Chance; and his companion, without occupation of any kind, fared worse; and any novelty would have been hailed with satisfaction.

It so happened one day, that a fisherman had met with an accident in the neighbouring village, and Tom Chance had to attend him. We had both strolled there together, and, while he manipulated his surgical operation, I, Yorke Maxwell, found amusement in watching the fishermen prepare their crafts and their nets for the nightly toil upon the lone waters.

It was a lovely day ; and an invalid gentleman had located himself in a sheltered spot on the sands, close to the rocks, against which support he leaned his feeble form. A young lady sat near him, sketching from nature ; and I watched them, unnoticed, for a longer period than was consistent with politeness.

In the first place, it was a surprise to see such people there at all, for the village was apparently only occupied by fisher-folk ; in the second place, the young lady was of pleasing appearance, and my sympathy with her was excited by the petulant peevishness of the invalid, which she received with such charming patience. At last they got up and went away, the last words I heard being,—

“ You think only of yourself, Helen ; you seem to forget I am shivering and cold, and ill besides ; there you sketch, sketch, sketch everlastingly ! ”

"I have been very careless, I fear," she replied, in deprecation of her industry; "but you know I must try and get some work done to sell."

"Nonsense, girl! Who do you think will buy your wretched drawings? And in this outlandish place too. No; you will be a hanger-on to me and my charity, till you share my last crust."

"That is what I fear," said the girl sadly. "But we must hope for the best. Let me help you?" she added, tenderly placing his arm within her own, and accommodating her young elastic steps to his uncertain feeble ones.

I watched them up the bank, and was strangely impelled to follow them, when I heard my friend hallooing from above, and joined him.

"I have been watching you, and shouting my lungs hoarse for some time, while you were worshipping a divinity in female

form — at least, I imagine so from your rapt gaze. Can a divinity possibly exist in such a place? *N.B.*—He is silent, he speaketh not—he lives upon the past! Come, old boy, wake up!”

I did wake up, with a hearty laugh, and described the strangers to him.

“But,” I added, “they may not be visitors, but to the manner born.”

“Time will show,” said my companion sententiously.

“How so?” I asked.

“The man looked ill, declared himself to be ill, and, from your description of his irritability, I note another symptom of sickness. I am the only doctor in the neighbourhood—at least, the nearest. You shall see your friends again, old fellow.”

His words were prophetic. In the course of a few days he was in medical attendance upon the sick man. He found them lodging at the house of a sea-

captain, and he told me upon his return that the malady of the patient was mortal. He had an internal abscess, a wearing and painful disease, but which was now telling upon his strength, and he was, in fact, sinking from weakness.

“And she?” I questioned.

“Oh, the girl, you mean? She is a capital nurse, a good creature, very tender and kind, and awfully fond of him, and, upon my word, not bad-looking—the sort of woman one would wish for when in trouble and sickness.”

And he was right in thus describing her. He had to visit his patient constantly, and I fell into the natural habit of accompanying him. This was not regarded as a liberty, for, strange to say, Mr Grain took a fancy to me; and I was pleased to know that, to some extent, I could relieve Helen of the arduous task of amusing and nursing him.

It soon became natural to call her Helen, and, in fact, as we had no formal introduction to her, we scarcely knew how else to address her. We had neither of us the slightest idea of being disrespectful by adopting a brotherly *rôle* towards Helen, and she was no prudish miss, but fell into these habits guilelessly. Tom, in his medical capacity, would advise Helen to take a walk in the fresh air, and they two would stroll out together, leaving me to my self-imposed task, which was one that called for some self-denial on my part, for I admired the girl, and I naturally preferred the companionship of one fair and young to that of a peevish old man.

It was almost a matter of course that I should be attracted by a girl possessing such sterling good qualities as I found Helen did. It was quite refreshing to solace oneself with her calm, sensible company after the fascination exercised

over me by the faithless, volatile Adèle. I had almost made up my mind that this was a genuine attachment—that this sober, brotherly affection was the only re-waking of love that my disappointed nature could experience.

Helen—my Helen, as I had almost thought—was loving, patient, full of gentleness; ready to sympathise alike with one's joyful or sorrowful humours, but possessing infinite power to soothe the weary-hearted—her tender, womanly nature was so ready to yield to, or suffer for others. She was thoroughly unselfish, and the comforts, hopes, and prospects of others seemed to interest her more than her own. Hers was essentially a domestic character. I saw she had great power of endurance, and I judged her to have an easy adaptability to circumstances, so that she might grace any position. But I imagined that she would perhaps be happier in the

accustomed manner of life. She was not lovely, but lovable. She was tall in height, of a slight figure, and fair-complexioned. It was a pensive style of face, but cheerfulness and contentment were her characteristics. She was one whom you would never think of describing by feature or form, but by the manners and qualities, though to whom, if you saw her without having the privilege of closer acquaintanceship, you would apply the term good-looking.

Mr Grain was one of the most melancholy individuals it has ever been my misfortune to know. I am sure he must, in health, have been one of the most tyrannical of men; he was merciless in exacting every attention and self-sacrifice that Helen could give him, and even begrudged her the time for rest and exercise. He seemed to be possessed of the oddest fancies and whims, and he

would keep her watching through the night to exercise the former, and busy during the day to gratify the latter. The poor girl was quite worn out, and a meaner nature would have revolted against the slavery it all involved; for this had been going on for a long period, and Helen had no natural affection to make it her duty, and only that of habit to make it her pleasure.

Mr Grain was not related to her at all, but Helen's parents had died in America while living in near neighbourhood to Mr and Mrs Grain; the latter had had a great affection for Helen, and had partly adopted the orphan, though her small income helped to keep the wolf from the door. This Mr Grain either wilfully or carelessly quite overlooked, and when the noble girl tried to provide luxuries for his sick-room by her own exertions, he only ridiculed the attempt. It was upon Mrs Grain's death

that they came to England; and they had travelled in a merchant-ship, commanded by the worthy captain in whose house they were now lodging.

Notwithstanding the disagreeable character of Mr Grain, I was much interested in him, and I sought to bring him into a more cheerful state of mind for Helen's sake. He was a well-read man, and had travelled in many countries; he had good descriptive power, and his anecdotes were amusing and often witty. He never talked of his home life in England or abroad, though I told him freely of mine. I did not think he was much interested in that, as he never made any comments upon it, nor never, of his own accord, referred to my own experience of life. But that my remarks about it had made some impression upon him, I found out after his death.

Helen told me that "the nights were his worst time—he was then so nervous

and fanciful; and if he slept, he awoke with such horrible sensations. "He never says much, but he will not let go my hand, and I can see by his agitated countenance, and the perspiration dropping from his forehead, that he has had a terrible struggle with his nightmare. As he gets weaker this is more apparent," she added; "it seems to have taken the place of the moods which he used to indulge in, and which Mrs Grain called his dark humours. I am afraid they shortened her life," Helen continued sadly; "but she besought me to stay with him and humour him, and so I have."

"Yes, Helen," I said, "you would be faithful to death; but you must take care of yourself, and, with that end in view, go out for a walk. You see Chance is ready now—and I too, to take his place by Mr Grain."

"How good you are!" she said grate-

fully, her whole countenance brightening at the prospect of the walk. "I can never thank you enough, Mr Maxwell, for all your care of him and me."

"Your thanks are ample reward, Helen," I said warmly.

I fancy she blushed—at all events, her colour was heightened—as she walked through the door which my friend held open for her. I thought what a nice pair they were, and how much of my affection they shared between them, when I went in to Mr Grain to talk and listen my best for his benefit. He was not communicative to-day, but decidedly weaker, and rather sleepy; and after he had given way to this inclination, and was well asleep, I went into the little garden behind the house, which was walled round.

I was wondering at the unusual length of Helen's absence, when, hearing footsteps behind the wall, which I thought to be

those of my friends, I was about to shout to them, but the footsteps stopped, and their voices were recognisable, as they talked in earnest tones. Tom seemed to be chief speaker; and, without meaning to listen, I found myself unable to resist the temptation of doing so. I could catch the words distinctly.

“Darling Helen! say you will have me—that you mean to be my redemption, and save me from all the evil that may tempt me through life. Dearest, I feel within me that you have power to make me a good or bad man; that if you refuse me, my misery will most likely end in something worse. Oh, my only love, can you not promise to be my wife, and let me have the care of your dear self through life?”

I could hear Helen sobbing, and I fancy Tom was distressed by her doing so, as he began to blame himself and comfort her;

and then there was an interval, and as he drew her to him in a fond embrace, which Helen's smothered voice made me quick to imagine, I heard her say,—

“I love you, Tom—you are the only brightness of my life; and I am willing to share your fate, whether for good or ill.”

“My darling! if God will, it shall be all good, but a poor one perhaps. I fear poverty only for your sake, my precious love.”

“And I,” said Helen, “like poverty. I glory in it; I am used to it.”

I felt I had heard too much, and moved guiltily away, to resume my watch over Mr Grain. Helen came in presently, her face full of suppressed happiness, a deep tender light in her eyes, but her hands as ready and willing for sick service as if no great change had passed into her prospects for the future.

Tom told me all as we went home,

under the cool moonlight; and it was perhaps as well that I had played the eavesdropper, or I should not have been prepared to give him the hearty congratulations which I now poured out in sufficient volume to satisfy the most ardent lover. The praises of his mistress did not end till bedtime, for when he left off, I began; and so on, till I, at least, was really sleepy.

And had I no regrets to stifle? Perhaps so; but that they were so slight, surprised me. I saw what an excellent match it would be for them both. He was merry, careless, buoyant, and sanguine; and she was thoughtful, prudent, and contented. His ardent nature would be tempered by hers, with its purer, soberer, holier aspirations. Tom was safe for life, and she happy; what more could I desire for either?



CHAPTER VIII.

MY MISSION TO ITALY.

I RETURNED to London soon after the engagement, and did not therefore witness the steady, sure approach of death to the invalid; nor the fitfulness of a lover's happiness that my friend enjoyed. I say fitfulness—not that any foolish, maidenly caprices on Helen's part made it so; but their intercourse was uncertain, depending as it did on the invalid's whims and state of health.

They had not deemed it expedient to make him their confidant; and thus their

private interviews were all stolen, and sometimes for several days together Tom only saw the lady of his love in the sick-room. It was very tantalising for lovers to be constantly embarrassed by the presence of a third party who had no sympathy with their love; and to Tom in particular, with his impulsive temperament, this was a real hardship. I was sorry to leave them, when, by staying, they might have had all the *tête-à-tête* interviews which they wished; but my uncle had written to tell me that he was far from well, and considerably excited by some tidings which had come to him from Italy.


I was, therefore, in some way prepared for the change which I found in his appearance. He had never recovered his usual health since our visit to Dalrymple, and, in my opinion, he had been suffering then in body more than he cared to

confess ; and his bodily weakness had acted upon his mind, and produced a morbid sensitiveness, which found vent in the somnambulism that I had witnessed. I was very uneasy about him, and grieved to see him assuming the habits and privileges of age—withdrawing himself almost entirely from society, giving up his riding exercise, and the amusement which his club afforded him. The love of betting and card-playing was gone, and though I should once have rejoiced at this, when I connected it with his broken health it gave me no satisfaction. Each wonted custom given up was only the cause to me of mournful foreboding. Those who have watched the progress of decay, and the gradual incapability to do, and willingness to leave undone, the usual employments by some valued friend, will understand my feelings.

I began to realise the fact that my uncle, for the future, would be an old man—no longer the gay companion of my youth, but the object of my care and tendance. After seeing Helen in her ministering usefulness in sickness, I could not help thinking how much a womanly presence would have soothed and comforted my uncle now.

Not that there was any actual disease to combat; had there been, the doctor might have pronounced the case to be more hopeful.

“It is unaccountable, my dear sir,” he said, “this sudden breaking up of Mr Dalrymple. A year ago I should have foretold for him a prolonged period of health and strength; he was younger than his years. But now there is a want of vitality in the whole system; a gradual weakening of the powers without apparent cause; and I cannot deceive



you, nor be blind to the fact, that it is a decay of nature, and not real disease, which we have to contend with. The only thing is to keep up the system, to study the diet and mode of living; and, my dear sir, cheerful society is the very backbone of the whole treatment. Solomon, in his day, made that discovery for us."

These were the facts that the doctor set before me and left me to digest, after a considerable study of his patient.

As regards the news from Italy, had it not been that his own letter stated his excitement, it would have been difficult for me to discover the symptoms of it in my uncle's manner and words when he detailed to me the accounts which had been sent him from there. These were taken from a letter assuming to be written by an old uncle of Nina, to reveal the fact that before her death, which happened

when my uncle was absent from the neighbourhood, a child had been born — a girl — and that this had been withheld from him at the time, for fear the child would be separated from its grandmother, then living, but since dead ; and also because the child would then probably be brought up an alien from the true Roman Catholic faith, which evil an officious priest had interfered to prevent.

The letter went on to say that the writer had been away when Mr Dalrymple had visited the country last year, or the revelation would then have been made ; but that, hearing afterwards of our visit, he thought it his duty to write to Mr Dalrymple, as he might be standing in the girl's light by longer keeping silence ; and, as he had the tale from the grandmother's own lips on her deathbed, so he now would hand down the secret to good keeping before his own time came to die.

I mused for some time after hearing the account from my uncle. I understood very little Italian ; but he said the letter was well written, in good Italian, and not in the usual vernacular of the district, and the tale was well told.

“You see, Yorke,” he said, “I make you my confidant even about the sins of my youth, and I want your help, Yorke. I am inclined to think it a ruse to obtain money ; but, if the story be true, I am in duty bound to provide for Nina’s child. I could not now travel so far, and endure the discomforts of a traveller’s life. Will you go there, Yorke, and discover all the truth about this, and bring me a faithful report ?”

“I should be glad to go,” I said, “but you are so out of health that I really cannot make up my mind to leave you.”

“Nonsense, Yorke !” said my uncle, with something of his old spirit. “I can-

not rest till I know about this, and you want to make me believe that I am an old man, with one foot in the grave."

So I went, leaving my uncle to the care of his valet, and travelling night and day to make the best speed I could. He had given me my credentials in Italian, explaining that I acted as his deputy, and he gave me minute directions as to my mode of treating the informant—how to find him, and to obtain corroboration of his tale from the priest and other old residents in the neighbourhood. I was to communicate with him from there, and give him all particulars about his supposed daughter; and his treatment of her would then very much depend upon this description. As it happened, he might have spared himself and me these tedious instructions.

I went to the home of Nina's parents, where they had lived and died, and where

the uncle of Nina was supposed still to live. An aged man greeted me there, politely enough, but his language was strange to me, and when I put the letter in his hand he shook his head, and I gathered from his words that he could not read the writing. He muttered something about Nina, and looked anxiously out of the door. I was convinced, from his knowledge of her name, that he was her uncle, though not the writer of the letter; but I took leave of him, feeling disappointed and quite at a loss how to proceed.

My next resource must be the priest, I thought, but first I would walk to the graveyard, where I had been an accidental spectator of my uncle's sorrow. I do not know what took me there, except an idle fancy, but it led me to a great discovery.

The last time I had seen that simple gravestone with "Nina" carved thereon,

a mourner stood beside it ; and now again, on my second visit, a mourner was there—a woman. She stood with her elbow on the head-stone, resting her face on her hand in an attitude both thoughtful and dejected. How long she had been there I know not, but I watched her with strange interest for some long minutes ; and then she sighed, turned away, and looked startled at the sight of a stranger and a foreigner in her close vicinity. A wild look came across her face, and she accosted me excitedly, and in English—she must have known I was an Englishman from my appearance.

“ Sir, you are—you have tidings of *him*—you are—his son—his son ! ” she continued, in pained, sad accents.

I began to comprehend that my strong likeness to my uncle must have troubled her, and that she knew him, or had seen his portrait. And who, then, could this

be grieving at the grave of Nina, and so strongly affected at the sight of one whom she thought to be his son? I had often been told of my family resemblance to my uncle by those who had known him when he was about my own age, and so I had no difficulty in tracing the supposed relationship.

“Ah, sir,” she continued, “pardon me; I have no right to speak. Forgive me! I am only a poor, broken-hearted woman, who has taken up a cross that has become too heavy to be borne. I am sure you come from *him*, and a look of him pained me. Pardon me that it is so. Alas! alas!”

And the poor creature wailed forth her sorrow in suppressed tones, her politeness to me not suffering her to show all the grief my presence caused her.

“You knew my uncle?” I said inquiringly.

“Ah ! uncle ?” she said rapturously. “Is it so—only your uncle ? Say it again, sir—that he is your uncle ?”

“My uncle sent me here,” I said,—“Mr Osmyth Dalrymple—”

“The same,” she interrupted eagerly. “My Mr Dalrymple—Osmyth—it must be so—and the likeness too. Holy Mary ! how like him you are ! It upset me, and brought me back to days long gone by—days that I have not dared to think of till lately. And he ?” she said softly. “Is he well—your brave uncle ?”

“Madam,” I said gravely, “I would rather first hear of your right to make these inquiries.”

She had tears in her eyes as she said,—

“You are prudent, sir, and suspicious and unfeeling—the way of the highly born.”

“Dear madam,” I answered, affected by her rebuke, “I trust not unfeeling, nor suspicious ; but I have a mission here,

and I want to fulfil it wisely and well. I have been to that cottage"—and I pointed to the place I had just left—"to see the uncle of a sainted angel called Nina."

"Ah! he called me *that*!" she said, looking up, delighted at this reference to Nina.

"I found there the supposed writer of this letter to my uncle."

I held out the letter for her inspection, and she looked eagerly at it, and explained,—

"I wrote it; I took so much trouble to make it clear and good, and like the best language of my country."

"Mr Dalrymple said it was well written, and in pure Italian," I said.

She looked gratified.

"And he? why did he not come to look for his—daughter? I thought he would," she said, with a heavy sigh, as if tired out with expectation and disappointment.

"Ah me! I thought he would."

“Why was the information withheld so long, if it be true?” I asked.

“True? Yes! I would not utter such a lie to him to save my life. I may not have said all the truth; but he had a daughter, sir. Perhaps you will not excuse me that I have deceived so much, but I had the good reason. And I have been trying to be great and noble, like the English people, all these years—all these years,” she added sadly.

“If my uncle has a daughter, where can I seek her? And you have not yet said why he was not told about her earlier.”

“It was no use to give him sorrow—not more than I could help. If by withholding a truth you spare some one suffering, is it not good to be merciful?”

I shook my head in dissension. My creed was the truth, all the truth, and no

deception. Hers was : Do not dread to do wrong that good may come of it.

“ His daughter lived but for one day,” she went on ; “ she died, and her grave is yonder.”

As she pointed to the churchyard we had left, I knew the truth—that Nina’s grave was really that of her child, and that Nina herself stood in living presence before me. I could form no further conjectures; this was enough food for reflection,—Nina, herself, living and well, and loving my uncle with the mad infatuation of her youth—a sober woman of forty or forty-five, dressed with simple elegance, and with a cultivation of manner and mind which I imagined the former Nina had not. Her face bore the traces of suffering and endurance, but her small Italian features were perfect, and her hair was black and glossy ; her sufferings had elevated her, for the expression of her face

was seraphic as that of a martyr who had been upheld through all the pain and sorrow by the object of self-sacrifice. I could not believe that her actions had been aught but those of a pure, noble, devoted woman. And with the consideration due to such I treated her; and she seemed to appreciate my respect, and to find the greatest happiness in my assurance of Mr Dalrymple's deep regret for her, and his fealty to her memory.

"Oh, my good sir, if he had but come!" was the constant refrain.

At last I was obliged to explain the reason why he had not done so; and, to my surprise, she seemed gratified.

"Ah!" she said, "it was not that he did not wish. I imagined him the old roving Osmyth, full of strength and energy—and he so changed! But he only wants the good nursing to make him well, and happy with Nina. Ah!" she recollected,

“that is not allowed. I am not his wife,” she said mournfully. “I know now how wrong we were—I knew long ago; and that took me away, for I felt it was not fitting that an ignorant peasant girl should be wife to a great English lord. But I loved him so! Holy Mary! how I loved him!”

I could only sympathise with her; I could not comfort her, as I fain would have, with the promise that my uncle would make her his wife and the companion of his latter days. I dreaded that he might not live long enough, or might not wish to perform that duty. Whatever I might hope, it was not for me to pin Nina’s faith to an uncertainty.

She had gained sufficient confidence in me now to narrate the particulars of her long and weary exile from home. I regret that I cannot give the account in her own words, there being something quaint and pathetic in her mode of speech, with its occasional


lapses into Italian, when she had not sufficient command of the English language to express all her meaning as rapidly as she wished. But I must recall the facts, as they impress one's memory in a stronger and more enduring manner than language, which is but the vehicle to convey them to the mind.





CHAPTER IX.

NINA'S STORY.

“ WAS quite a young girl when Mr Dalrymple came to our village. He hurt his foot in one of his rambles across the mountain, and it was I who found him and gave him assistance and support to our cottage home. I had seen him go forth in the morning, and had watched for his return, as he always gave me a kind recognition in passing ; and he was so handsome, great, and good that I had fallen into the habit of looking out for him, to receive maybe

a careless smile and nod, or a flattering and gay word or two, for my reward.

“I was used to the mountain passes, and before nightfall I determined to set out in search of him, as my heart misgave me on his account; for he had mentioned to me the route he intended to take, and ought to have been back sooner. I wandered on alone, and became so anxious that I gave our usual mountain call, and constantly repeated it, till I heard an answering cry. I found him in sorry plight, unable to move without the greatest pain, and it was with much difficulty that we accomplished the descent from the mountain; but, as night was closing in, there was no time to seek further assistance. It was a slow and tedious progress; but he was brave as a lion, and bore the pain without a murmur.

“But to me that walk, in which I became his prop and support, was one of intense

happiness. I would willingly have prolonged it for ever; and when he condoled with me on account of my troublesome occupation, I dare not tell him that my heart was beating rapidly with emotion—with pity for him, and pride of my own position as guide and companion to him—and that the slow progress we made was too rapid, as only with its duration would the thrill of happiness which this service for him produced in me, last. He did not dream of my love for him, nor I till this event enlightened me; and the depth of my emotion startled me. I did not endeavour to conceal it, but must have shown it a thousand times before his own answering affection discovered my secret.

“I shall never forget those days when he was forced to rest in our cottage—how his very presence seemed like the sunshine within it; and he was as full of life and joy as a bird, though a

caged one. With what loving eyes I watched him, as he read and smoked in our poor home, seeming so thoroughly one of us that I forgot the difference of station between us—forgot even my feminine reticence, and showed my liking for him in so many unmistakable ways that he could not but observe it.

“At first he was only sorry for me, I think—he was much graver, and did not talk so freely; but by degrees his old freedom of speech and manner returned, and he was never weary of hearing me sing to him, or tell him of my wild fancies about the unknown world, and my longing to travel and learn other languages. And he would presently take little walks round about the cottage, leaning on my shoulder, and gradually longer ones; and so on, till he was able to do without his ‘crutch,’ as he called me. But he still chose to lay his hand on my shoulder, but

more carefully, as if afraid of hurting me ; and I knew then, by the tenderness of his touch, that he loved me.

“ I was contented to know this—I wanted no further revelation ; and in my simplicity I believed that he was also contented. But no ; I soon discovered that he was not satisfied with this, and I fear I was too willing to listen to his assurance that no ceremony of man could bind us together more completely than our own solemn oath of allegiance and faithfulness. He told me that no priest could make his vow to be true to me, and me only, more irrevocable, and that in a part of his own country a marriage was considered legal when certain words were spoken before witnesses, without the presence or intervention of any priest. I believed him ; but I dare not confess to the good father, and I think my only religion at this time consisted of a mad worship of a human idol.

Nina's Story.

"We were very happy—too happy. Life was as a lovely dream to me, till he went away—on business, he said; but I expect he needed a change, and wanted to test the depth of his attachment to me—to see whether he could be contented to part with me for ever. At least such ideas haunted me and made me unhappy. But we had parted in the most friendly and affectionate way, he turning back again and again to hold me once more in his arms, and whisper of his undying love for me.

"They were sad days after he left; but my mother was very good to me, and as the time went on and he did not return, when she saw how it was with me, she never reproached me, though she declared I had been wronged and forsaken. She compelled me to confess to, and seek pardon from the priest; and I did so, though I was sure Mr Dalrymple would be angry if I knew of it.

lo
m
cl

“ But the priest told me it was sinful to love a heretic, and that I must have no more dealings with him, and that if my child lived, it was to be baptized into the true Church, and that it must be separated from me if I did not consent to conquer my wicked love for its father. And he told me that I was an ignorant peasant girl, and that I must not expect this grand English gentleman would take me into his own country, where he would be ashamed of me ; and perhaps, as he had gone to his own people, he would stay with them and never return. But, he said, this was only what I deserved, as punishment for associating with a heretic and being disobedient to the Church—for withdrawing myself from all religious exercises, because I had allowed the sinful love of a creature to separate me from the Church. But he was kind to me in his way, for the good father had known me since I was a child,

and he gave me a blessing, which was more than I deserved.

“But his words set me thinking, and, I am bound to say, the sin against the Church seemed a small thing to me in comparison with the idea that my love might be a disgrace to him whom I wanted only to bless with it. I pictured my beloved in his home in England, which he had told me about, and which he probably loved as I did my native mountains. I saw him, in fancy, surrounded by high-bred ladies, and I knew my place was not with them, and never would be ; for it was true that, with all my great love for him, I was but a lowly-born maiden as the priest had said. Then if he, for my sake, forsook all this, it would be exile to him ; and I could not look forward to happiness bought by any sacrifice of his.

“It was very dreary watching for his return with such conflicting feelings of hope

and despair. But I had letters from him, containing short words and few of them, but expressing the truest affection. He knew that I could not spell out a long letter without great difficulty, and it now pained me that he knew of my ignorance.

“The time came for my baby to be born, and when I saw its innocent face I knew myself to be its guilty mother. I realised for the first time the misery that I had brought upon her and myself, and I resolved to fly from temptation, and to spare him the sorrow of renouncing me. For I knew he still loved me, but I thought he would soon forget me and marry one in his own rank of life. My baby died and was buried, and my heart seemed frozen within me.

“I then planned my flight with my mother. She was proud of my resolution, and carried out my request that, when Mr Dalrymple came, he should be

shown my baby's grave as that of my own. I overcame all her fears for my own future, telling her that if I fared badly I could always obtain shelter in some of the convents; and she saw that I was too determined upon my course to be dissuaded.

"I had barely made my escape, so I was afterwards told, when Mr Dalrymple returned; and my mother had no time to ponder about the wisdom of the deceit we were practising towards him. She said very little about me, but took him at once to the grave with my name on the headstone. My mother said that he lay beside it that night; and, when he came to the cottage afterwards, the change that grief had made on his countenance startled her; but he was calm, and he begged for some trifles of mine, to remind him of me. She gave him his own ring, which I had worn since w

plighted our troth to each other ; and a lock of my hair, which I had left for him. He pressed my mother to accept money from him, which she did ; she did not utter one word of rebuke, and she said he looked so stricken that she had a mind to tell him of my whereabouts. But before the thought was acted upon he was gone ; and from that day till he came to the grave last summer, I heard nothing of him.

“ After leaving home, I travelled on foot for days, and slept—or lay down to rest, for sleep seldom came to relieve me—under any shelter I could find. I had enough money to buy bread to eat, but none for further emergencies ; and, besides being footsore and shoeless, when I came to Venice I was penniless. But these hardships were nothing to the agony of mind which I suffered. If it had not been for the constant exercise, I should

have done something desperate. As it was, I walked on hour after hour, with little consciousness of fatigue; but by doing so I became quite exhausted at last, and was so unfit for work, even if I could have procured it, that I sought and obtained refuge at a convent.

“The good sisters, after hearing my tale, believed me; or, at all events, finding me too ill to go beyond their door, they took me in, fed, clothed, and nursed me till I was stronger. I might have remained there as lay-sister; but I loved freedom, and thought that a more active life would prevent me giving way to bitter reflections. So I begged the reverend mother to find me a situation. There was nothing for them to gain by my continuing there, and the lady abbess soon heard of a family who required a lady's-maid.

“The good sisters taught me how to use my needle skilfully, and told me what my

duties would be ; for many of them had been used to having their own maids in their worldly days, before they had entered the blessed walls of the convent. So it fell out that I obtained a situation agreeable to me, and adapted to my then feeble strength.

“ I lived with this Italian family three years. Every summer I had a holiday, and I then saw my mother, and gave her sufficient of my earnings to keep her in plenty. I learned here to speak good Italian ; and, as I had time to read, I improved myself a great deal ; and I studied the ways of my young ladies, for I was very imitative, and, wishing to become like them, I missed no opportunity of observing their deportment and mode of speech.

“ But the family went to Rome ; and, seeing so many English ladies there, I thought it would be well for me to take a situation in an English family. I gave notice, and

obtained so good a recommendation that I had no difficulty in procuring an appointment such as I wished for in an English family. The family was of high birth, and had the same gentle bearing which I had so much admired in Mr Dalrymple. It was while with them that I learned to speak and write English; and the lady was very free with me, and liked to hear about my native mountains, and told me in return about the manners and customs of the English people.

“I do not know why I loved to hear about everything English, as I never expected to see Mr Dalrymple again; and I actually dreaded lest I should casually hear his name mentioned, because I felt sure he had long since forgotten me, and was happily married.

“But no thought of marrying entered my own head; and I was said to be above my place, and very unapproachable, by my fellow-servants. I suppose my early love

had made me fastidious and hard to please. Anyhow, I lived very much to myself.

“ When the family returned to England, though I might have gone too, I preferred to find occupation in Rome ; but I went home for a while, and nursed my mother till she died ; and then, being used to a town life, I found the country very lonely, and I returned to Rome, to become the companion this time to an invalid English lady. She did not seem to find any difference in our positions, but from that day to now she has made as much of me as if I were her sister, rather than her paid attendant. But she is a Protestant, and we cannot think the same about things ; so it makes the reading aloud to her rather painful sometimes, as she naturally likes books which have a tendency to denounce our faith as bigoted and narrow and unchristian.

“ But the priest tells me the reading will do me no harm, as it is my duty to obey my

mistress, and that I must say an Ave to the Holy Mother before I commence. I know Miss Anstruther is a good woman, though she does not believe in the true faith; and she acknowledges the same of me—so that we are happy together, with all our differences.

“But I must tell you how I came back here this summer for a change, as I needed a breath of my native air; and I found that Mr Dalrymple had visited my grave once more. I cannot tell you how great a longing came over me to see him again! How I wondered if he had indeed remembered me during all these years of separation! How I went over, in my mind, all the circumstances of my departure from home, so many weary years ago—almost a lifetime—and I wondered, Had I been cruel to him in my flight? And the great yearning towards him, in my heart, refused to be satisfied, till I had made one effort again to see him. Then I thought, He shall not know I am liv-

ing ; but I will tell him of his daughter, and if he wishes to see her, and hastens here, I shall know he still loves my memory ; and I shall venture to seek one interview to obtain his pardon for my desertion. But, indeed, I punished myself in going, and I went not to spare myself, but him.

“ I do not know what good can come of seeing him after we have learned to do without each other, but since he visited my grave my heart can receive no other satisfaction but a sight of his face. I ought to have died with my baby long ago, I know,” she said bitterly. “ It would have been far better than to seek to obtrude myself upon his notice now again. Oh, shame is me that I cannot control this restless longing to behold him once more ! ”

But I comforted her by saying that she had acted for the best, though she had done wrong to deceive Mr Dalrymple, as it had

caused him so much grief and remorse. I told her there was little doubt but he would be even now anxious that they should meet again. I said they had both much to forgive; she had been wronged by him in the first place, and she had then deprived him of the opportunity to redress that wrong. This being so, there should be no idea of recrimination to mar their reconciliation. She might still have the happiness of ministering to his wants, which were those of a sick man, and of cheering his remaining days upon earth, but that probably she would not have the privilege long.

I said this to prepare her for a great change in him, and she wept silently as I described his condition; but she evidently regarded herself as supremely blessed, even by so sad a prospect, so long as she could be with him till death. I could not but observe, while realising the mournfulness of such a reunion, the

fitness of the time of its occurrence, as they had both paid the penalty of their early error in a lonely life—the woman, as is usual, perhaps being the greater sufferer, as her early romance had kept itself obstinately foremost in her mind. And I had heard my uncle say that he doubted his fulfilment of his own resolution to do justice to this betrayed one, had she lived.

I knew that time had levelled many difficulties in the way of their marriage, so that now I felt as sure as one man can possibly be of the probable actions of another that he would honour this faithful woman in every way that he could. But though I had in some degree blamed Nina for her deception, I knew it had proceeded from a true womanly instinct, and that if she had remained to meet my uncle again in those days of his pride, and her own youthful beauty and ignorance, she might have been less worthily treated by him than she deserved.



CHAPTER X.

ATONEMENT.

“**N**INA, you are my true wife at last! Mine for ever, till death shall part us! Are you satisfied, my own?”

“Nearly, but not quite,” she replied, looking up to him with that seraphic countenance, which, though full of love and worship of her hero, could yet never again assume a gay enough expression to efface that spiritual one which portrays the life of self-sacrifice, and which is so beautiful, if so sad to behold.

There was something then in her face which moved her newly-made husband strangely. He drew her fondly to him, and then turned aside to hide his emotion, as in a broken voice he said,—

“I can — never atone! It is too late, Nina.”

“My beloved,” said Nina, laying her hand on his arm, “do not think that I am not happy. This peace is too good—too much of heaven—but I want to tell you that, as I am not of your Church, I should feel more your wife if the priest married us according to the manner of our Holy Church.”

“Such a wish has only to be mentioned, Nina. It shall be done. Differences of creed will never come between us. But I wish, my dear one, that I could recall one of those passionate, brilliant glances that were so charming in my youthful love. Not but that you are beautiful as

ever in my eyes, dear ; but your face upbraids me."

"Never, oh never !" she interrupted eagerly. "I could not. I have never done so."

"I believe you, my faithful Nina. But I blame myself the more that you are merciful. Your countenance is contented, but the past suffering has painted itself thereon in too imperishable colours."

"Do not mind the past, love," she said soothingly, "when we have all the future before us. And do not look at my face, if it is cruel to you ; read my heart, as it explains itself in words and actions."

"Dearest, I do that. But I must needs be greedy enough to feast myself on your dear face at the same time—so dear and so loving still, Nina—more touching for that look which I dread to interpret. Oh, my love ! my love ! my poor Nina ! It will be your turn to weep at my grave soon. Do you know it ?"

She wept and clung to him as she said,—

“You will come to sunny Italy with me, dear, and you will get well there.”

He only smiled as he said,—

“Your love will be the best medicine ; but did I not tell you that it was too late for atonement ? What joy can you have in marrying a poor old invalid ?”

“Ah, Osmyth, you say that to tease me. What joy do I want except the knowledge that you love and honour me ? What bliss can be greater than to feel that I can soothe, cheer, and comfort you ? I have outlived passion, hope, joy ; but there is love remaining, and that is sufficient for me. It has been my support in absence, and it is not now likely to become less. We are young no longer, and the night of peace has settled upon us, Osmyth. Let us be grateful to the good Father of all.”

“I am deeply thankful, Nina, my treasure, my first and last love—my wife!”

It had been difficult to make my uncle believe that Nina was alive. But when he had heard the story, and was told that she was not only living, but then actually in his own house, his impatience to see her was irrepressible. So they met again, and they found that through all the changes that time had made in them both their love was unaltered. It was love, it is true, less passionate than that which had held them in bondage in their early days; but it was love in the most purified, exalted sense of the word.

We had planned, Nina and I, this surprise for him. She had been afraid that he might decline to receive her, and had begged me to keep her secret till she was too near to him to justify his refusal to see her.

To please her, we travelled to England

in the same hurried fashion that I had adopted on my outward journey, and we had found the invalid in much the same condition as when I left him. But the happiness of having Nina there worked as a charm upon him. For some time he was really stronger, and we thought that his ultimate recovery might be possible.

They were married—doubly married, as Nina wished ; and then they went abroad, for my uncle knew that none of his fashionable friends would recognise his lowly-born bride.

There had been considerable gossip about the event, and the manner in which it took place ; and I am bound to say that it was singular enough to excite a scandal, though the world knew nothing about the previous history of this romance. My uncle had always shown little respect for the proprieties of social life, and his strange wedding therefore surprised society

less. But many unpleasant remarks were made—not to me directly, but they came to my knowledge, and I was myself questioned pretty closely about the lady's pedigree, nationality, circumstances, and personal appearance, till the subject was worn out, or curiosity became absorbed in a newer and more interesting direction.

The opinion of the world had little weight with me ; it did not represent true morality, and could not rejoice at the sight of a repentant prodigal. Its law of morality only required that all transgressions against it should be kept respectably out of sight. I knew my uncle would have been more popular if he had been less honourable ; he would probably have been denounced by the ladies as a “dreadful man,” but the sacred precincts of the temple of fashion would have been open to him still. I found myself on quite a different footing with the world. My im-

portance, as heir of Dalrymple, was acknowledged when my uncle could no longer woo and win a youthful bride. I was courted, flattered, and welcomed where I had once been only tolerated. But this did not turn my head. I accepted all the honour, and gave less in return. I was like a porcupine in the circle of beauty and fashion; I absolutely bristled with suspicion and cynicism.

Soon after this my old friend and tutor, the rector of Dalrymple, wrote to tell me of his daughter's approaching marriage to Mr Rivers, and to invite me to act as a groomsman on the occasion, saying that, as an old playmate of Adèle, she would feel my acceptance of the post to be both a pleasure and honour. Now I knew the idea had emanated from the worthy rector himself, and that Adèle could frame no reasonable excuse for not acceding to her father's

wish, but I thought it best to accept the challenge.

I was curious to see how this fair deceiver would conduct herself on the occasion, and I had subdued my own once passionate admiration of her. Had I not even been again on the threshold of Cupid's kingdom? No; it would not pain me to see Adèle married, and it would gratify the rector.

So I went, and took up my quarters at the old rectory, as I had no desire to awake the dormant echoes of the Hall, and Mr Hawley was anxious to be my host.

It was pleasant to be there once more—to be in such a haven of peace as that of a country house, where goodness, kindness, and affection have combined to produce connubial felicity, and to form out of that the real atmosphere of home. It is not a common atmosphere; it is

not always that even a woman has the power to create this wholesome and beautiful region; her domain may be a house, a mansion, a palace, a cottage, but not a home such as the old sweet ditty commends, and which refreshes alike the mind and body of its inmates. It is a privilege to hear the words of the familiar strain, with a comprehension of their adaptation to our own dwelling. It is a rare occurrence to see a real home, and in town I believe it to be, at its best, but an imaginary possession.

As the country favours simplicity of life, strength of body, mental vigour, and purer dispositions; so, I believe, it is a more natural soil wherein to cultivate a home. For nothing is achieved without effort, not even the certain continuance of love in a cottage.

My wonder now, was not that these parents were blessed with such a perfect

daughter, but rather how Adèle became such an unworthy representative of so unworldly a couple. The reason may be sought for and not found, or it may be guessed at incorrectly; but I know that it is no unusual phenomenon for wicked parents to be restrained by the influence of good children, while godly parents have to sorrow over the evil hearts of depraved children; clever parents are disappointed by the mediocre talents of their progeny, and ignorant ones are as often seen staring in amazement at, or stupid appreciation of, the attainments of their children, which they cannot wholly comprehend. It is not uncommon to see beauty and elegance chaperoned by repulsively plain mothers, and other physical incongruities, in these relationships.

However, Adèle's errors were but venial, after the manner and judgment of the world; and parents are not perhaps as

strict in our own day as they were in the time of the Judges in Israel. Anyhow, I think that the position of an only child needs exceptional criticism; for parents, with the best intentions, spoil such, or let the child alone, to its own undoing. Numbers increase discipline or severity of rule, from the necessity of insuring peace, quite as much as from a sense of the responsibility of the trust.

And Adèle behaved very prettily to the last in the home of her childhood. She was affectionately dutiful in her manner to her parents, very thoughtfully considerate to her friends, and most kind and sisterly in her treatment of Yorke Maxwell. Heaven knows how she managed to ignore so easily and gracefully our former terms of intimacy, with what rare art she contrived to re-establish between us the old footing from which we had once so naturally and, for the time, happily diverged! Her lover

complaisantly acquiesced in the arrangement, blissfully or wilfully blind to the former peccadilloes of his promised wife.

Then, too, her behaviour to the bridegroom elect was faultless ; she would sweetly lend her ear to his whisperings in the midst of those occupations which ladies on the eve of matrimony seem to find so engrossing—those airy nothings of tulle and flummery for feminine adornment, which are so charming and sacred to the sterner sex, because so mysterious.

But when we come to the bridesmaids, thereby hangs a tale—a definition of my own contentment, and the peculiar sanctity to me of Dalrymple Rectory. Yes ; I am ashamed to confess it, and ignominiously hang my head like a guilty schoolboy ; for have I not been the veriest novice at making, talking of, or feeling love hitherto ? And yet Adèle's chief bridesmaid had a charm for me which produced this guilty

sensation—I mean that of being ashamed of my previous exploits in Cupid's kingdom.

Mr Rivers had a sister—such a sister ! Manly vanity and weakness could not admire the rival, even of a dead affection ; I could not honour Mr Rivers with my esteem, and felt only compassion for the victim that could be so mildly fooled. But a brother shining in a sister's reflected light is quite another thing.





CHAPTER XI.

MAUDE RIVERS.

THE first importance that Ernest Rivers obtained in my estimation was when I saw a dainty little figure approach him after the marriage ceremony, and, laying a hand on his shoulder to assist the operation of propelling herself on tiptoes, to bring her face on a level with his own, she gave him several kisses. As she descended I observed a pair of shining dewdrops stealing down the fair cheeks, and leaving regretfully behind them a second pair of stationary

ones to dim the beauty of those bright, brown eyes, to my heart's distraction. I did not recover my equilibrium till I heard a peal of merry laughter from her lips, and saw the answering smile in the eyes which dispersed those symbols of deep, true feeling which had pained me.

Maude Rivers was not what would be considered by most people attractive at first sight; and as great matters often take their rise and progress from small beginnings, so possibly from the interest excited in me by those tears of sisterly renunciation arose the great affection which I conceived for Maude, and which has grown and matured till almost it is beyond increase. But I am conscious, by continued intercourse, of a closer and truer affinity between us each day—that is, some new light breaks upon my soul and reveals an inexhaustible wealth of untried feeling. Maude Rivers was short in stature, of dark

complexion ; she had bright, brown, roguish eyes ; her nose I will not dilate upon, as its only significance to me was a certain piquancy or originality which it helped the eyes to express. Ill-natured critics might not be thus discriminating, and might even affirm that they had seen a far better shaped organ of the kind on some of the smaller canine species ; but even so clever a caricaturist could not make less than pretty the small mouth, with the fresh rosy lips, which seemed to me so expressive of good temper as they readily displayed a row of even teeth, without painfully stretching their rosy softness into the sharp lines which thin lips assume in smiling. Her hair was brown and curly, and rough as well as curly — not soft and silky, but careless, unmanageable locks which would persist in looking wayward and saucy. She had a small but well-developed figure, a slender waist, well-rounded arms, sloping

shoulders, and, though short, a well-shaped neck, it being slender without scragginess. When I came to know her, she appeared to me to be a most charming petite brunette, with nothing stiff about her manners, and in conversation quite original and vivacious. What more I found her, will perhaps be the revelation of future pages.

For the present the bride claimed my notice, and my warm congratulations were given to the bridegroom, with a consciousness of the approval of a certain dark-eyed sister standing near us. I wrung his hand almost affectionately, as I thought, "What good there must be in the fellow for his sister thus to idolise him !"

I never had a sister, and could not guess that they are apt to lavish an inordinate affection upon their bachelor brothers, which perhaps does not lessen, but becomes less demonstrative, as new

ties claim attention from one or the other, or both.

Adèle smiled contentedly as she turned from her husband to kiss her mother; but the tears of the latter awoke a kindred spark of feeling in her own more thoughtless nature, and it was with real emotion that she received her father's blessing.

Then the whole party left the church; and, with a determination to stifle sentimental regrets, the kindly parents became the cheerful host and hostess, and Adèle the merriest bride that ever graced a bridal breakfast. Ernest Rivers, the proud and happy bridegroom, made so good a speech, and spoke so affectionately and respectfully of his wife's parents, that I could not but admire the man, and confess, in my heart, that he had more to recommend him to futurity than I had deemed possible.

His uncle, the dean, was present, and

bore testimony to the high character of his nephew; and if there was a little tone of patronage in this notice, it might well be pardoned, as most curates are the unfortunate, or fortunate, recipients of similar favours from the higher dignitaries of the Church. Had he dared to assume the same tone to Maude I might have been less tolerant towards him, but the fair sex was evidently regarded as a shrine for the secular worship of the reverend bachelor. He did not fail to do homage to his saucy niece; so that between him and her devoted cavalier, Yorke Maxwell, Maude was in no danger of being neglected.

The rest of the bridesmaids and their respective grooms were to me so unimportant that I scarcely noticed them; but that we were in the same condition in regard to their observation I may fairly imagine, as they were so very well

contented with each other that some of them afterwards entered together into the holy bonds of matrimony, while as yet I was only on my probation as a lover.

How the day passed so quickly was a marvel to me. We danced in the evening, but that was the smallest satisfaction the day gave me; for, though it was an undoubted felicity to have my arm round the fairy waist, and her hand clasped in my own, as the seductive strains of Strauss tempted our willing footsteps to waltz—though those dances with her were begun and ended in a happy dream; still, when others claimed her from me, I found the idea of another so holding her, so engrossing her attention, and she so willing to be dancing with that hateful being, quite an agonising experience. I could not, or would not choose another partner myself, but found a doubtful pleasure in watching *Maude*.

I shall never forget that first night of our acquaintance, for, though I had undoubtedly seen Maude on the previous night, she had then been to me but as one stranger amongst others. I remember still my own ridiculous jealousy, and Maude's apparent indifference as to whom her partner was—myself or another—but I caught her eye a time or two at such times; and these glances I fed upon for the space of several minutes, till a too brilliant smile upon her partner again drove me mad with jealousy.

And then how artfully the darling girl asked me, how I had “enjoyed the last waltz,” and said that she was getting quite tired of dancing; was not I? As if she did not know I had been standing mooning about, a solitary spectator of the dances which she and others had found so entrancing; as if she did not know that this dance with herself was the only re-

ward which was worth waiting and watching for; as if she did not know, in fact, that I was a silly, infatuated individual, willing already to become her slave. But to sacrifice a dance with her, that was a little too hard.

“Tired?” I said. “No! Why should I be? Had I not been resting and waiting for her?” And why should she be tired? Most young ladies could dance all night; and I did not think it fair for them to tire themselves out with other partners, and leave a poor fellow without his dance; they ought to be more merciful and considerate, and dance less at a time. It was not intended for all the couples to keep constantly whirling round till the final chord was struck.

So I grumbled, and Maude smiled her good-humoured smile, and gave me a delightfully roguish glance from those round, brown eyes,—I do not deny that eyes are

all invariably round, and that it is the lids that really vary in shape ; but certainly, taking the effect for the reality, Maude's eyes looked like dark, bright moons, as they twinkled with mischief, when she replied,—

“Yes, Mr Maxwell, your argument does you credit. I was thinking just the same, and that it would be as well for us to curtail our dance, to avoid over-fatigue.”

“Certainly,” I replied gravely, if she wished ; I would not obtrude my own desires. Was she really so tired ? I asked tenderly, looking about for a seat. “Or shall we walk a little—slowly ?”

At this Maude relented, and laughingly said,—

“It is very funny, Mr Maxwell, but I do not feel at all tired now. I did just now when I was dancing with Mr Paxton, but it has gone off. I am quite ready.”

“Are you sure—quite sure you are not

too fatigued? Do you say so only to please me?" I inquired eagerly.

"Quite sure! It must have been fancy. I think this music capital; it is quite inspiring."

I needed no further permission. And what was there in her words which gave my heart such lightness, and made me so awfully self-complacent that I civilly addressed the man who accosted us at our next resting point? He had made a mistake on his card, and declared that Miss Rivers had promised him this dance. I knew there was no error on my side; but I pitied the poor fellow and was conciliatory, showed him my own and Maude's cards written on so carefully by my own pencil.

He was satisfied, and I again whirled round, supporting the light, dainty form, and imagining myself—where? Neither here nor there, nor in any region that can

be defined except as that which borders on spirit-land. I had been too thoughtless, too inconsiderate, as my partner's flagging footsteps now betrayed fatigue. I became conscious of this; in fact, I am conscious of nothing but her. I stop precipitately, and look anxiously at her, and she smiles as sweetly as before—more sweetly. I can scarcely trace the mischievous gleam in her dear eyes, but her face has grown whiter; and in her light dress, with that soberer, sweeter, fainter smile, I recognise the ethereal in her, and am somehow led away to think of an angel in mortal clothing. And my heart beats as I almost dread lest she is borne over to possess the wings.


There is an infinite anxiety in my voice and manner, and something of reverence in my tone, as I say,—

“I fear you are quite overdone now, Miss Rivers. How very stupid of me to

forget ! Do you feel faint ? Had I known you were at all delicate, I would not for the world have allowed you to gratify me at this cost."

The fair, spiritual vision faded away, as the sweet Maude laughed gaily, and the effort, or some other emotion, flushed her pallid cheek and brow.

"Delicate !" she exclaimed. "That is fun ! I am always considered so strong ; it is one of my good points, and indeed quite a recommendation in itself. It is a question that has been asked me, with intense interest, by half-a-score of anxious mothers,—Are you strong, Miss Rivers ? And they have shaken their heads doubtfully, and said—You are very young, Miss Rivers ; you do not look fit for the duties. And I have had such spasmodic efforts to keep myself from the disgrace of a laugh. And then they look you over with such inquisitive and, I must own, anxious eyes.



No doubt it is all natural and right, and they ought to be particular in selecting some one to train their children; but when one is in the opposite position, it sometimes makes one feel ludicrous. I shall never forget being questioned about my strength for the first time. I was not prepared with an answer, and I was, in fact, natural. I laughed outright, and explained that, without having the capabilities of a horse, I had a fair amount of physical strength, but that I had thought my mental qualifications were of the most importance. ‘Very important, no doubt, Miss Rivers,’ replied the lady icily,—she was offended at my levity,—‘but I am the judge of what properties are necessary for the lady who has to take charge of my children. I require some one strong, because of the early hours necessary for children; and I am delicate myself, and do not desire a second person in the house

to be constantly under the doctor's care. For the rest, I must have a *proper* young lady; and then comes the consideration of accomplishments and mental cultivation. It is a serious thing, Miss Rivers, and I fear you are unsuitable.' 'Not serious enough for the appointment,' I said, rising at once, and with a hysterical sensation in my throat as I bade her good-morning and hurried from the room."

"I knew better the next time, Mr Maxwell," continued Maude laughingly; "I was a most proper person indeed. I carried an eyeglass, which I used incessantly, and I made heavy talk and dwelt upon all the dreary facts I knew. I overdid my part, and my zoology, biology, geology, and æsthetical tastes overpowered my inquisitor. The lighter pursuits — music, drawing, painting, dancing—were more important. In vain I protested that these were the things in which I had attained

most proficiency. ‘Quite impossible, Miss Rivers! I have no faith in one who considers herself capable of undertaking the whole range of the sciences in connection with the lighter studies. You are one of the first on my list of applicants, and you must allow me to suggest that I am likely to find one more suitable.’ I retired crest-fallen.

“But I will stop, Mr Maxwell. Your unfortunate remark about my delicacy has brought you this unedifying description of my experience in setting out to work for a living.”

Notwithstanding the spirited manner in which she recounted her difficulties, Maude Rivers could not disguise from me a certain depression which the memory of them produced, even upon her gay nature. And I, watching and hearing her, felt a new-born pity for the whole governess class, and chafed in my spirit to know that Maude

must needs submit to what I chose to consider the indignity of an employer's criticism, followed up, as I knew it would be, in case of an engagement, by interference in the schoolroom ; the narrow suspicions, in regard to her personal conduct, of an exacting lady of fashion, who had herself never known what it was to be wearied out by teaching and training the young mind to cast off the evil or mischievous propensities natural to our fallen race.

I have no doubt it was very unfair thus to espouse the one side, and forget the responsibilities of a mother who resigns her children to the charge of a stranger. But I was angry that Maude could not escape from the troubles of life ; that, amongst so many girls around her who had all the privileges of fortune, and the leisure that riches insure to its possessors, she was the one whom fortune had not

so favoured. I neither thought of nor realised, at that time, the possibility that Providence had allowed her a less hazardous course, a more ennobling occupation, than her wealthier sisters. But I could not help seeing that Maude had a more contented countenance than many of the girls around us, as well as one full of earnest purpose. I was sure that she had not made me her confidant from mere thoughtlessness, nor for idle chatter. The dear girl did not wish me to regard her in any other light than that of a poor governess.

As soon as I showed too much interest in my fair partner, the confession came, in the most natural manner in the world, it is true; but I admired the tact of, the mode of, and the motive that prompted its utterance, more than I can tell. If she intended to check my interest in her, she was mistaken; but I knew that an

unwise display of it would injure my cause at this early stage of our acquaintance, and I saw that her position demanded from me more respectful deference, and more caution in developing my own attachment, than I would show to one of the favourites of fortune.

So I contented myself with laughing at her information as naturally as I could, and assuring her that, "so far from being bored by it, I had found her description very racy and amusing. So pray tell me, Miss Rivers, whether you at last succeeded in being everything that a lady required in her governess?"

"Yes!" said Maude brightly; "I suppose so. I have been in a widow's family for a quarter now, and I am to return there in a day or two. She is very kind, and the children are nice, but awfully troublesome."

"How many pupils have you, Miss Rivers?"

"Six—four boys and two girls; they are affectionate children, but boisterous. No, I don't find them too many; they keep me thoroughly busy, but when I am teaching, that does not matter. I do not like to be idle, and they are interesting pupils; and I believe they are really beginning to obey me a little—at least they promised me they would try when I went back."

Beginning to obey! What a tale it told to me of patience and self-control required in the teacher. After this revelation mortal man could not be other than kind and courteous to a fascinating little sprite like Maude Rivers; and I tried to overcome the impatience which seized me to make her understand, by word and manner, how warm my feelings were towards her. And though love at first sight is not unusual, a man may make a fool of himself for very pity's sake; and I knew *that* inference would not escape

Maude's quick recognition. So I kept guard over myself; and Mrs Hawley interrupted our confidential chat in time to prevent comment upon it.

I have felt ashamed to recount my own third attack of love fever, but honesty is the best policy, and I must own to the reality of the previous attacks—the vehemence in one case, the rapid course and the quick recovery in both. The third has yet to follow in the same wake. Or shall love be love for evermore?





CHAPTER XII.

NOTHING VENTURE NOTHING HAVE.

THE next day and the following were uneventful. Maude was very charming, but I could not help fancying she had schooled herself into being the proper individual which a governess was expected to be.

And I? Strange to say, for the first time in my life I was constrained and nervous in speech and manner. I was in truth very much in the condition of the man who

“Felt he could a speech produce
Much to the purpose, if his tongue were loose ;
But, being tried, it died upon the lip,
Faint as a chicken’s note that has the pip.”

VOL. I.

N

I was unnatural from the effort I made to restrain my feelings ; and I think that shyness is generally the outcome of anxiety to say the right thing, or fear to say the wrong.

The third day was the last of Maude's holidays ; on the following she was to leave us, to resume her duties at Mrs Seaton's, the widow of a wealthy manufacturer in Lancashire.

I was miserable at the prospect, as I found the time slipping away, and all my chances of interesting Maude on my own behalf so small and, alas ! so short. I felt that some of this unnatural restraint must be cast away. Maude Rivers must understand clearly before we parted that I loved her, and sought her love in return. I did not hope to receive it ; I did not imagine that she would unwooed be won, and my usual self-conceit had died a sudden death. I did not for a moment conceive it to be possible that she would consider me an

attractive suitor, or that she would regard me in the light of a future husband. But I must, at least, make some effort to induce her to consider my suit; and then, in the future, I might perhaps earn the reward of patient waiting and devoted attention.

There had been few opportunities to make a *tête-à-tête* with Maude, as other guests besides ourselves were enjoying the hospitality so pleasantly rendered by our host and hostess. But they had now departed, and Mrs Hawley, like a good old-fashioned housekeeper, was evidently intent upon setting her lares and penates in regulation form.

She, therefore, seemed relieved when I proposed to walk as far as Dalrymple Hall, and asked Mr Hawley and Maude to accompany me. Of course, I knew very well that it would have been useless to expect Maude to walk with me there, or anywhere, without that dreadful bugbear to all lovers,

a third person. But I valued my old friend too highly to give the idea such a bold mental signification, only I was conscious of an irresistible longing to be alone with Maude, and I now regarded her with some anxiety as she was apparently trying to frame some reasonable excuse for not accepting my challenge.

"I fear," she said, in that hesitating manner which so plainly discovers a mind on the slow, unknown road to invention, "that I cannot go out this morning. I have to pack up—a truly feminine occupation," she added laughingly, "as I suppose men only stow their things away, or leave the work to others."

This latter was in reply to my remark that the packing could "be done in half-an-hour." I ventured to quarrel with her then for asserting that our sex was either clumsy or idle, which I professed to think was an imputation upon my own character.

“But I only intended my words to apply to packing, Mr Maxwell,” she said, raising those sweet, roguish eyes to meet mine for a moment, “but I cannot desert dear Mrs Hawley this morning, when she is so lonely. Besides, I have letters to write.”

“Nonsense, Maude, my dear!” said Mrs Hawley. “I am going to be quite busy, and shall be so pleased to know that you are enjoying yourself. You must go. The walk will do you good. You ought to love exercise. It was different in my young days; young people were active then, and did not care to sit moping in the house over a book or music. We did not read much then, it is true—no doubt the present generation is much advanced, and all that; but mine was a vigorous, healthy generation, and a useful one. We studied our health and our duty—how to be useful to our fellow-beings in acts, not fine words

and theories. Practical common-sense held its own in my day."

Mr Hawley and I were both laughing heartily by this time, and Maude was looking both surprised and hurt—which latter expression Mrs Hawley, good creature, perceived, as she suddenly came to a standstill for lack of breath or words.

"Now, Maude, my dear, I am not personal. I know you to be most industrious, but you need fresh air; and I shall just send you out, as your own mother might have done, if you had had one, poor child! I am getting old—and, you will think, jealous of the rising generation."

"No, no, Mrs Hawley. But I will do as you bid me, as I dare not, after your criticism, offer the services of such an inert and incapable individual to lighten your work."

Maude said this gaily, with no disagreeable sarcasm, and she put her hands over

her ears in playful deprecation of further words, as she bounded away with graceful haste to make her toilet.

I thought it so nice of her to submit to Mrs Hawley's command; and her pretended eagerness to obey her was so pretty and so girlish, that I was still looking at the door in memory of her exit when she reappeared, fully equipped, saying saucily,—

“Ah, Mr Maxwell, I am ready, you see, and waiting your serene highness's leisurely movements. Likewise Mr Hawley is in attendance upon you; and Mrs Hawley is like the busy bee, flying about from honey-pot to honey-pot in her wonderful storeroom. Who is active now?”

“It is all your fault if I am behind time, Miss Rivers,” I said reproachfully.

“If!” she replied. “Is there a doubt?” adding, with a woman's ready tact, to be blind to an awkward meaning, “It is such

a very busy generation ; every one is behind the times, Mr Maxwell. No one can keep up with them without great effort and self-denial," she continued merrily. "There is so much light in these days, and so much darkness trying in vain to reach the light ! It is quite oppressive to reflect upon all the new things which are being, or going to be, invented or expounded."

By this time we had joined Mr Hawley, and he inquired what Maude was discussing so earnestly.

I told him she had "begun a defence of the activity of the present generation, myself included ;" but Maude saucily interposed.

"Not at all, Mr Hawley ! I believe he is an unworthy representative of our times ! I don't know it, but I suspect him to be idle," she said laughingly,—“chiefly because he made such an indignant retort when I

happened to advert to such a possibility. Then he is a traitor to his cause, for he evidently agrees with Mrs Hawley in her opinion of the risen and rising men and women. I believe Mrs Hawley limited herself to a criticism of women ; but I like to be thorough, though I belong to the nineteenth century, and I hold that the men must be judged with us."

"Which judgment could not fail to be appreciated by us, when received in such good company," I said gallantly.

And Mr Hawley, who was much amused, said,—“ You see, my dear, you place us in an awkward predicament ; we cannot either agree or disagree with your views, without showing disrespect to some one.”

“ But I do not find fault with the past generation,” said Maude earnestly ; “ I would neither be so rude nor so foolish. I only say the world is advancing, and ask you to give us the credit of advancing with it.”

“Undoubtedly, my dear,” said Mr Hawley, “progress is the decree of Providence ; but will you not allow to the old people also the privilege of progression ?”

“Yes, Mr Hawley ! And I feel it is very wrong of me to talk—to give vent so freely to my opinions before you ; only, I must say, that most of the people I have known set themselves against this grand law of nature, and prefer to walk the earth in their old shoes—to believe that they will never wear out, or, if they do, that those which replace them will be inferior.”

“My dear,” said Mr Hawley thoughtfully, “you are very young, and with years you will gain wisdom. I do not mean that you are devoid of it, far from it ; but you will have larger views yourself, in seeing that others also have them ; you will understand that your experience does not represent the whole human experience—that, in fact, though there are many old people,

as you say, too conservative to appreciate changes, even though they tend towards improvement, and too obstinately perverse to own their conviction of reform being necessary, when they hold it,—still, there are others—many honoured names amongst our aged compeers—who, as I may say, almost lead the young towards progression. You start life, like many young people, Maude—enthusiastic, but as intolerant of any opinions, ideas, actions, or dispositions contrary to your own, as the most bigoted old woman that ever lived. You see, my dear, extremes meet ; and even youth and old age may form a synthesis.”

Mr Hawley laughed, and I gave chorus ; but poor Maude looked crestfallen.

“ Now, Maude,” continued Mr Hawley, “ I did not wish to cast a shadow upon your bright face, nor to check the vigour of your inquiring mind. Search for right, and you will find it ! You need little direction, for

it is out of mistakes that knowledge dawns upon us; and, I must say, it is nobler to think for yourself than to follow the lead of another's thoughts."

"Dear Mr Hawley, you are giving me quite a sermon—and for my good, I know; but please do not think me so dreadfully in earnest in my silly chatter."

"Excuse me, Maude; it is not silly to think for yourself about anything and everything. But perhaps it might be wiser—for you especially, my dear—to think *to* yourself."

"Oh, thank you, Mr Hawley! I know that! So many times I have been recommended by old ladies," she said laughingly, "to think twice before I speak. But I always tell them I do. I think what I am going to say unconsciously, instinctively as it were, and then I say it; and, in speaking, I think again—conscious action to speak and to think what I speak."

"I shall begin to be altogether frightened of you, Miss Rivers," I remarked; "a young lady who thinks twice, must become so terribly shrewd."

"You are both quizzing me," said Maude; "but one word more, Mr Hawley. You know I am out of school now; you do not suppose I rattle on in this voluble and foolish manner when I am with my pupils?"

"My dear, you have too much good sense to do that," he interrupted.

"Well then, Mr Hawley, please do not think that I have a special horror of old ladies because of what has been said. But, any way, Mrs Hawley is not exactly old."

"When you begin to compliment a husband upon the youthfulness of his wife, my dear Maude," said Mr Hawley oracularly, "he is simply nonplussed."

"Now, Mr Hawley, I have been very

naughty, but forgive me, pray ; and do not tease, and I will be good next time. Only sometimes I do wish I could think everything out loud to some one," she added, with a melodramatic sigh.

"Your nature is too loquacious," said Mr Hawley, again laughing.

I was quiet ; but I longed that some day Yorke Maxwell might be the lucky individual to be the recipient of all Maude's ideas and crude fancies, providing they were always conveyed to me direct from those rosy lips.

Maude looked charmingly well — her eyes brighter than ever with the excitement of the conversation, and her cheeks quite rosy with the air and exercise. She was dressed in grey—a complete suit, with a tight jacket fitting her pretty figure to perfection—a small grey hat with a ruby-coloured feather, a simple linen collar fastened by a tiny brooch ;

gloves and boots of the neatest make imaginable, completed her attire.

By this time we had reached the Hall, and, while looking at its neglected condition, Mr Hawley said mournfully,—

“Not much progression here, Yorke!”

While Maude, with her usual quickness, remarked involuntarily,—

“What a pity!”

I made no rejoinder. I was too much impressed by the forlorn appearance of the once happy home of my ancestors. I recognised the possibility, the almost certainty, that at some future day my wife would make it a happy one again, for me at least; but as I looked at Maude in her lightheartedness, I wondered whether such a prospect might not seem too sombre for her. While so thinking, we entered; and as Maude went through the great hall, and the rooms (looking so stiff and formal to my

eye), her silence seemed to be a knell to all my hopes.

Suddenly she sat down in one of the high-backed carved oak chairs, and looked through a large oriel window, which, from one corner of the library, commanded a view of the level plain beyond, of such extent that its monotony was, to my mind, too unbroken. I cannot forget the sensation of relief her exclamation afforded me.

"What a glorious old house, Mr Hawley! So quaint, so antique! This window is a history to me! I can fancy this being a favourite nook of the ladies of Dalrymple for centuries; and that broad window seat is so cosy, and the view so expansive, that it gives one a sense of breathing more easily; and there is such an extent of sky to gaze upon in ever-changing variety,—and I believe yes, I am sure," she said, standing

in her eagerness, "there is the sea in the far horizon!"

"You are right," I said, in a well-pleased tone. "The sea is visible, I believe, in clear weather, though I cannot boast of being eagle-eyed enough to discern it now."

"Oh! can you not?" she replied. "But, Mr Hawley, you can? Now, do try and see it, or I shall feel too imaginative!"

Mr Hawley rubbed his glasses, and diligently but vainly examined the prospect,—not the faintest trace of ocean could he discover.

"But it is there nevertheless, my dear," he said; "and what is quite as true, there is a Bluebeard's chamber in this very house."

"Oh, is there?" said Maude, laughing in delight. "Where is it, and what do you mean? Do show me it, and tell me all about it, Mr Maxwell!"

I looked grave, and Mr Hawley began to fear his levity was badly timed. But I said,—

“Have you never heard about the murder at Dalrymple seventeen years ago?”

Maude shook her head soberly enough now; for it is certain that we can hear of an accumulation of horrors of the olden days far more complacently than of *one* within the limits of our own career.

“I forgot that you are so much of a stranger to this part, Miss Rivers. Had you lived here, you must have heard it mentioned sometime, as it is a topic of local interest, and, like many other murders, it remains clouded in mystery.”

“But it was not one of your own family, Mr Maxwell; it was a servant, or some one of that sort?”

“No, Miss Rivers. It was a lady, hand-

some, and still young, as people say when the object is thirty or so—not over the formidable two-score.”

“Oh, Mr Maxwell, this is dreadful! But, if you don’t mind, I would like to hear more—but not if it pains you at all,” she added, as the gravity of my countenance reminded her that what might be an interesting story to others, might be a painful one to the narrator.

Mr Hawley said,—“I do not think it will freshen Yorke’s memory to talk about it, Maude, as unfortunately it happens to be a subject that he cannot forget; but, if you do not object, my dear, I will go as far as the housekeeper’s room. I want to inquire about one of her young women who has absented herself from my Sunday class of late.”

“Certainly, Mr Hawley,” I said, without giving Maude a chance to reply. “Mrs Mayne will be delighted with the

honour of a call from you ; and I will promise not to frighten Miss Rivers, in your absence, by a too tragical description."

"I will go, then ; and, Yorke, you can look for me afterwards in the garden, as Green always likes a word with me."

So I was at last alone with Maude ; but instead of leading the conversation towards a declaration of attachment, I was compelled to answer her innumerable questions about the domestic tragedy I had witnessed.

And this done, I had to explain, or create excuses for my uncle's absence all these years, and to hear his conduct reflected upon somewhat unfavourably ; for Miss Rivers was an outspoken young lady, as most of these fair creatures with ideas of their own are apt to be. And I verily believe she delighted to punish my presumption towards herself—which she divined, as women so easily can — by

making me and those belonging to me the butt of her criticism; at all events, she inferred that it was little less than criminal to make the place and people suffer for the indulgence of private sentiment; and that, if my uncle did not, I ought to know better.

I explained that my uncle had suffered from the effects of the murder, and from unmerited suspicion; and that his father had been harsh to him previously, and so had occasioned his banishment, and the adoption of such habits as were not in accordance with a quiet country life.

But Miss Rivers declared oracularly that "duty was duty, and no one was exempt from its claims, however high their rank."

"And now Mr Dalrymple is married, and you are separated from him, shall you live here?" she asked. "And shall

you build model cottages, and make the good folks on the estate model people ; and introduce so much novelty into Dalrymple village, as shall wake up its dead-alive inhabitants, who seem to have been struck motionless by a magic wand fifty years ago ?”

Miss Rivers laughed ; but I was in earnest as I answered,—

“ You forget that I should be only my uncle’s agent. I might wish to make improvements if the place were my own,” I added, suddenly awake to a keen sense of a landlord’s responsibilities, though in truth the subject had been in my mind at times, though I was satisfied that it should usually be a dormant one.

“ But,” replied Maude, “ if Mr Dalrymple is so fond of you, as he appears to be from what you say, he would be induced by you to make necessary beneficial alterations ; and if people will not do their own

work, they should at least find a good deputy."

"That is true," I said musingly. "But until now my uncle has liked and needed my companionship; now that he is married this is altered, and I must own the difference does not seem, so far as I am concerned, very advantageous. I feel dreadfully lonely and forsaken," I said, with an appealing glance at Maude for sympathy.

But Maude hurriedly inquired,—

"What made him marry an Italian?"

"That which induces the rest of mankind to marry, I suppose—love."

"Oh!" said Maude. "Is she a Protestant?"

"No; she is a Roman Catholic."

"How dreadful, Mr Maxwell!" said Maude, scandalised. "And you say he loves her, and is ill too! She will certainly convert him."

I laughed at her earnestness, but she rebuked me.

“It is not such a laughing matter, Mr Maxwell. You must get him to come home—or go to him. Do you not see that he is in the greatest danger—living in a foreign land, amongst Romanists, and his wife one? Indeed, I know wives often do make converts of their husbands, Mr Maxwell.”

“I believe you could make a convert of me, if you were a Romanist,” I said.

Maude blushed, but was too earnest to be much disconcerted.

“Mr Maxwell, you do not mean that, of course. You are strong and well, and not like a man who is sick, and therefore weakened in mind and body. Besides, you must be different to Mr Dalrymple, as I imagine him from your description—vacillating, and not of very firm opinions. You are—”

I was waiting eagerly for the rest, but she checked herself, and added, after a pause,—

“If you have not made up your mind about religion, you ought to do so, and be too assured of your faith to have it upset by any stray influence.”

“Not any stray influence,—only one, Miss Rivers—yours !”

She had the most brilliant colour in her face, and a soft light in those changeable eyes, in which earnest purpose had anon eclipsed the roguishness ; but she said,—

“Not mine, certainly, Mr Maxwell ! Nor any other, I hope. Please think for yourself.”

“I will, Miss Rivers,” I said reverently. “But give me some encouragement to think on this subject. Let me feel that you are interested in me.”

“I am, Mr Maxwell. How could I help being, when so much is at stake ?”

“Yes, I understand you, Miss Rivers, and I mean to do what I say; but—if my views on this point were established—do you think you could begin to be interested in me on my own account? Do you think—forgive my abruptness, Miss Rivers—you are so good and true yourself, you must know that I am true in this at least, that I love you devotedly. You seem so suitable to me—so fitted to be an angel of light leading me upwards in this world to the next. I mean that, in seeing you so lovely in mind and person, I am driven to desperation when I think how unworthy you may esteem me to be for the bestowal of your precious love. And I am unworthy—God knows. But I will be so no longer, dearest Maude, if you can give me some encouragement; and if you cannot, I think even then, for your sake, because I have known you, I will become worthier.”

Maude was in tears, and trembled very much ; all the colour had gone from her dear face, and I was angry with myself for being so impulsive.

“Dear Maude, I have been too rash ; I have been carried away with my feelings, and have forgotten that this comes to you suddenly, and has shocked you on my account. You fear to grieve me by your answer ?” I said bitterly, shading my eyes with my hand to hide my unmanly emotion.

She laid her hand compassionately on my arm, and I restrained myself no longer, but, in raising her hand tenderly to my lips, the bitterness of my feelings found vent in an oppressive sob.

“It has been a surprise to me, Mr Maxwell, but not a shock,” she said kindly. “I fear you think me so conceited, because I have been asserting myself so largely to-day, or else you would scarcely shame me

by calling yourself unworthy. Oh, not that at all, Mr Maxwell! You have only done me too much honour—I am so sorry, so grieved.”

I was drinking in her words from her own lips, so eagerly I had watched their movements till now. But I knew what was coming, and I was weak enough to hide my eyes from her, as she added,—

“I like you very much as a friend, but do not think about me any more, please, Mr Maxwell; I cannot—reciprocate your feelings. Do not make me so sorry,” she added, again laying her hand on my coat-sleeve; for the touch was so light, it barely rested on the cloth.

I laid my own on hers, to hold it there, as I tried to read her true meaning, when I questioned her,—

“Will you not give me some hope for the future? Can I really never win your favour?”

"You have my favour—as a friend," she said.

"Then, is there any reason why that feeling should not be allowed the chance of being increased and changed to something more like my own deep affection?" I said. "If there be no obstacle, this might be. There have been cases when even extreme aversion has been turned into the fondest love—won to it by the persevering devotion of the abhorred lover."

"Oh, don't, Mr Maxwell!" said Maude, in a grieved voice.

I think my tone touched her more than the poor, inadequate words I used; in truth, my own voice was a stranger to me. It had never till then had that hard, metallic ring, that utter hopelessness of tone.

"There is no obstacle, Mr Maxwell—not such as you think; but I am only a poor governess, and—and I have made up my

mind to be my husband's first love," she said bravely.

The words "my husband" fired me with renewed ardour—that, and the cause of her refusal. I would win her yet; I would even now surmount these difficulties.

"The first reason for your giving me so much pain, Miss Rivers, is easily disposed of; that is, if you mean to infer from the fact that you are willing to use your abilities for the benefit of the rising generation, with whom you are so much in harmony, that you are unfitting yourself for marriage. If you have any mistaken notion that my own social position is superior, pray let me set before you what that position really is. I am simply a dependant upon my uncle's bounty; and as I am nothing better than an idler, I am rather less than a dependant, who earns the reward of one."

"Ah, that is different, Mr Maxwell. He is like your father, while my employer has

no interest in me. Still this is, in my opinion, a slighter barrier between us than your previous attachment to Adèle."

"She has told you that. I knew it. I could expect no reticence about my affairs from your amiable sister-in-law."

"Do not be so ironical, Mr Maxwell. If Adèle had been considerate enough about your wounded feelings to be silent about her conquest, I should have heard about it from other sources."

"My wounded feelings!" I ejaculated, in a mortified tone. "Do you think if I were heartsore, as you assume, I should have been present at her marriage, and have calmly given her and her chosen husband my blessing?"

"I fear, Mr Maxwell, your presence on that occasion, and your sudden prepossession for me"—she looked down and blushed as she said this—"only confirm me in the wisdom of my resolution to be the object

of the first and only love of some one ; or else," she added saucily, "live and die a bachelor, as reads an old epitaph in reference to a single lady of seventy summers."

"I would rather have your compassion than this disbelief in my truth or affection, Miss Rivers," I said reproachfully.

"Evanescient, Mr Maxwell !" was Maude's consolatory rejoinder.

And just then Mr Hawley came to us. We both looked as unconcerned as we could when he said "that my tale had been a long one."

"Rather," I replied ; "and it will be a never-ending one, Mr Hawley !"

I looked pointedly at Maude, and she blushed, as she gave her attention to her gloves, and said,—

"Mysteries are difficult to solve, Mr Hawley."

I believe the rest of the day was passed far from happily by either of us, though

Maude affected the utmost gaiety and chattered unceasingly. She very likely made my silence less apparent by doing so ; but Mr and Mrs Hawley told her she was exercising her conversational freedom in preparation for the silence of the schoolroom.

“ I should like to see you with your pupils, Maude ! ” Mrs Hawley said, with a disapproving shake of her head.

“ Come and see me then,” replied Maude.

“ She is quite discreet enough when occasion requires, I have no doubt,” said Mr Hawley encouragingly.

“ Shall I go instead of you, Mrs Hawley, and report faithfully ? ” I asked. “ I am going into Lancashire shortly.”

“ No, Mr Maxwell,” said Maude decidedly. But when Mrs Hawley looked surprised at her vehemence, she added, “ You are not at all likely to be near Midgemoor, as Mrs Seaton’s is the

only respectable house for miles—two at least.”

“I am sometimes found in unexpected places, Miss Rivers. My friends may not all have the happiness of possessing luxurious abodes, but — respectable — I hope you don’t dream they would be other than that ?” I said, with a laugh.

I had heard all that was necessary. There could be no difficulty in finding Midgemoor, and still less in discerning the only decent house in the place. I was very well satisfied that it was so ; there would be little society, or, at all events, little chance of constantly meeting and talking to the masculine members of that select coterie.

This was some comfort to me, and when I said “Good-bye” to Maude in the morning, and clasped her hand, more warmly than a chance acquaintance had any right to do, did I fancy there was a

little flutter in that small hand? Did she really betray so much emotion? And were there tears rising into those sweet, brown eyes as she whispered,—

“Good-bye, Mr Maxwell—for ever!”?

END OF VOL. I.



September, 1882.

F. V. WHITE & CO.'S
NEW WORKS OF FICTION.

A BROKEN BLOSSOM. By FLORENCE MARRYAT, Author of "My Sister the Actress," "Phyllida," "Love's Conflict," &c., &c. In picture boards, 2s.; post free, 2s. 4d. Just Ready.

SCOTSMAN says:—"Deserves to be ranked as the most artistic and altogether the best work of fiction its clever and prolific author has yet written."

JOHN BULL says:—"A really charming story, full of delicate pathos and quiet humour, pleasant to read, and pleasant to remember."

SYLVIA'S HOME JOURNAL says:—"This is an inexpensive edition of one of the most charming, if not the most charming, of Florence Marryat's works. There is not a dull page in the whole book."

LLOYD'S says:—"A Broken Blossom' is a very brightly and tenderly told story."

Also ready, uniform with the above,

MY SISTER THE ACTRESS. By FLORENCE MARRYAT, Author of "Love's Conflict," "Phyllida," "How They Loved Him," &c., &c. In picture boards, 2s.; post free, 2s. 4d.

JOHN BULL says:—"My Sister the Actress' is the best novel we have had the pleasure of reading from the pen of Miss Florence Marryat."

COURT JOURNAL says:—"Will be read through with avidity."

COURT CIRCULAR says:—"My Sister the Actress' is infinitely above the average run of novels. . . . A skilfully told and remarkably interesting story which will add to Miss Marryat's reputation."

SCOTSMAN says:—"The tone of the book is distinctly wholesome."

DAILY NEWS says:—"It is both clever and amusing."

PUBLIC OPINION says:—"Everywhere it is fresh, lively, and thoughtful."

F. V. White & Co., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.

F. V. WHITE & CO.'S SELECT NOVELS.

Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. each.

THE FOLLOWING VOLUMES OF THE SERIES ARE NOW READY,
*And can be obtained of all Booksellers in Town and Country, and at
 all Railway Bookstalls.*

MY SISTER THE ACTRESS. By FLORENCE MAREYAT.

SUNDAY TIMES says:—"The characters are drawn with great power. . . . The story is one of unusual interest and ought to secure a great number of readers."

SYLVIA'S HOME JOURNAL says:—"We can fully recommend the book to our readers as being thoroughly interesting and cleverly written."

MORNING POST says:—"It is a very pretty story and told in the Author's happiest manner."

THE DEAN'S WIFE. By MRS. EILOART.

JOHN BULL says:—"Any reader who wants a good story thoroughly well told cannot do better than read 'The Dean's Wife.'"

SYLVIA'S HOME JOURNAL says:—"This is a charming book. The character of the 'The Dean's Wife' is drawn by a hand that can delineate clearly and cleverly without exaggerating. It is bright, interesting, amusing, . . . and is original in conception."

A BROKEN BLOSSOM. By FLORENCE MAR- RYAT.

SCOTSMAN says:—"Deserves to be ranked as the most artistic and altogether the best work of fiction its clever and prolific author has yet written."

JOHN BULL says:—"A really charming story, full of delicate pathos and quiet humour, pleasant to read, and pleasant to remember."

TWO MEN AND A MAID. By HARRIETT JAY, Author of "The Queen of Connaught," &c.

GRAPHIC says:—"Compared with the former works of the authoress of 'The Queen of Connaught' this novel must be pronounced second to none."

NORTH BRITISH DAILY MAIL says:—"Abounding in pathetic incidents and strongly dramatic situations."

F. V. White & Co., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.

THE POPULAR NEW NOVELS AT ALL LIBRARIES.

ALL AMONG THE BARLEY. By **FLORA HAYTER.** 3 vols.

LOST IN THE CROWD. By the Author of
"Recommended to Mercy." 3 vols.
September 14.

HOW THEY LOVED HIM. By **FLORENCE MARRYAT**, Author of "My Sister the Actress," "A Broken Blossom," &c. 3 vols. Second Edition.

ATHENÆUM says:—"Mrs. Lean has written a stronger book than she ever wrote before."

LLOYD'S says:—" 'How They Loved Him' is equal to the best of Miss Marryat's novels."

THREE FAIR DAUGHTERS. By **LAURENCE BROOKE**, Author of "The Queen of Two Worlds," &c. 3 vols.

ATHENÆUM says:—"Mr. Brooke has told well what he had to tell, and has produced three readable volumes, natural, entertaining, and fairly artistic. . . . 'Three Fair Daughters' is a pretty and a prettily-written tale."

COURT CIRCULAR says:—"Much as we liked Mr. Brooke's former work, his last book infinitely surpasses it in every way. From the first chapter to the last the attention of the reader is enchained."

QUEEN says:—"A vein of pleasant humour and lively fancy runs through this story from beginning to end."

JOHN BULL says:—"Indeed, the whole story is fresh and amusing in no common degree, and will hardly fail to give pleasure wherever it may be read."

COURT JOURNAL says:—"Laurence Brooke is a brilliant writer."

F. V. White & Co., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.

SWEETHEART AND WIFE. By **LADY CONSTANCE HOWARD.** 3 vols. Second Edition.

WHITEHALL REVIEW says:—"The story from first to last is attractive, and cannot fail to command wide favour. . . . There is, indeed, throughout the whole of the story a most unusual power, not only of language but of imagination, and the tender pathos, which is introduced in no laboured fashion, adds a charm which it is difficult to describe, but impossible for the reader not to appreciate."

LIFE says:—"Sweetheart and Wife' is a love idyll, skilfully painted in the midst of many people and many scenes, described by one who writes with that very rare attribute of the modern novelist—knowledge of, and familiarity with, the society she pictures."

COURT CIRCULAR says:—"There is a genuine flavour of the old-fashioned romance in it which is too frequently lacking in what may be termed the latter-day novel."

WAS HERS THE FAULT? By the Author of
"A Cruel Secret," "Wooing a Sweetbriar," &c. 3 vols.

QUEEN says:—"There is much cleverness in the story."

ACADEMY says:—"The book is very readable."

PHYLLIDA. By **FLORENCE MARRYAT,** Author of
"My Sister the Actress," "A Broken Blossom," &c.
3 vols. Third Edition.

COURT JOURNAL says:—"Phyllida' is decidedly one of the best novels of the season."

SUNDAY TIMES says:—"This is one of the most fascinating and interesting novels we have met with for a long time."

JOHN BULL says:—"Phyllida' has all the advantage which a very striking and dramatic opening can give it."

MORNING POST says:—"Phyllida' is a novel of which the author may be justly proud."

MY LADY CLARE. By **Mrs. EILOART**, Author of "Lady Moretoun's Daughter," "The Dean's Wife," "How He Won Her," "Some of Our Girls," "Just a Woman," "St. Bedes," &c., &c. 3 vols.

DAILY TELEGRAPH says:—"The interest is maintained with undeniable force and skill."

SPECTATOR says:—"Mrs. Eiloart may be congratulated on having written an extremely readable novel."

STANDARD says:—"The story is told well and pleasantly."

COURT CIRCULAR says:—"Mrs. Eiloart has once more produced a very capital and interesting novel."

SUNDAY TIMES says:—"A clever and interesting story. The characters are skilfully painted. A novel worth reading."

A LOVELESS SACRIFICE. By **INA CASSILIS**, Author of "Guilty without Crime." 3 vols.

JOHN BULL says:—"The story is a pleasant one—healthy in tone, lofty in teaching, and very sympathetic in manner and style."

LIFE says:—"Miss Cassilis will please a very large class of readers."

WESTERN DAILY MERCURY says:—"It is a cleverly-compiled novel. The characters, which at first are light and sketchy, gradually grow in depth and significance, so as to produce lightness and force as well as sufficiency. The witty conversations, the epigrams, not unblended with what is sympathetic and noble, impart a life and a reality into the novel which are at once pleasant and enjoyable."

TWO MEN AND A MAID. By **HARRIETT JAY**, Author of "The Queen of Connaught," &c. 3 vols. Second Edition.

GRAPHIC says:—"Compared with the former works of the authoress of 'The Queen of Connaught' this novel must be pronounced second to none."

SUNDAY TIMES says:—"The gradual building up of the incidents preceding the wedding and the dim foreshadowing of catastrophe are managed with such skill as to produce the greatest excitement of expectation."

NORTH BRITISH DAILY MAIL says:—"Abounding in pathetic incidents and strongly dramatic situations."

F. V. White & Co., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.

THE PRIEST'S BLESSING. By HARRIETT JAY,
Author of "Two Men and a Maid," "The Queen of
Connaught," &c. Reduced in price from 10s. 6d. to
3s. 6d.

(Dedicated to the RIGHT HON. W. E. FORSTER, M.P.)

ERA says:—"Told with much pathos and power."

SATURDAY REVIEW says:—"We can say for ourselves that we
have read its three hundred pages with unfailing interest."

DAILY TELEGRAPH says:—"Intimate knowledge of the national
character is shown by the writer, who inscribes her book to Mr. Forster
in earnest and somewhat impulsive language."

LLOYD'S says:—"Any one who wishes to realise the mischief
which may be done by the ceaseless plotting of the Catholic priests
cannot do better than read 'The Priest's Blessing.'"

DARCY AND FRIENDS. By JOSEPH McKIM.
Crown 8vo. Cloth, 7s. 6d.

PUBLIC OPINION says:—"The description and dialogue of this
tale are exceptionally good, and we have no hesitation in saying that
the present tale is of high quality and indicates an amount of appre-
ciation of human character on which we can only give the most
favourable verdict."

THE TWO VICTORS. By E. BEDELL BENJAMIN.
Crown 8vo. Cloth, 7s. 6d.

JOHN BULL says:—"We shall not disclose the plot, but leave our
readers the pleasure of unravelling it for themselves, merely saying that
the story is well told and of a healthy tone throughout."

AMICO'S LITTLE GIRL. By MISS MONTGOMERY
CAMPBELL. Crown 8vo. Cloth, 7s. 6d.

COURT JOURNAL says:—"The world of art, both of music and
painting, is charmingly explored in 'Amico's Little Girl,' and much
agreeable information concerning both is conveyed by the sojourn of
the different personages in Italy and Germany."

F. V. White & Co., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS.

Just Ready.

In picture cover, price 1s.; post free, 1s. 2d.,

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF FRED.

G. BURNABY, Lieut.-Col. Commanding the Royal Horse Guards Blue, Author of "A Ride to Khiva."

POEMS AND LYRICS FOR IDLE HOURS.

By CHARLOTTE A. PRICE. Post 8vo. Cloth, 7s. 6d.

POEMS. By MRS. C. B. LANGSTON. Fcap. 8vo.

Cloth gilt, gilt edges, 5s.

UNCLE GRUMPY, and other Plays for Juvenile

Actors and Actresses. By R. ST. JOHN CORBET.

Crown 8vo. Cloth, 2s. Post free, 2s. 3d.

LIVERPOOL DAILY POST says:—"A pleasant little work, which will be a valuable acquisition to boys and girls in holiday time. The plays are bright and humorous, and, as set forth on the title-page, may be easily learned, easily acted, and easily mounted."

DUNDEE ADVERTISER says:—"As a book of parlour theatricals it is admirably suited to its purpose."

UNCLE ANTONY'S NOTE BOOK. By MARY

CAUMONT. Crown 8vo. Cloth, 2s. 6d. Post free, 2s. 9d.

SCOTSMAN says:—"Miss Caumont has produced a volume of charming little stories for children, full of genuine pathos and dealing with subjects and incidents such as young readers can appreciate."

HOUSEHOLD CHEMISTRY FOR THE NON-

CHEMICAL. By A. J. SHILTON, F.C.S. Crown 8vo.

Limp cloth, 2s. Post free, 2s. 4d.

ADVICE TO A SISTER. Limp cloth, 2s.

THE DECLINE AND FALL of the BRITISH

EMPIRE. By LANG-TUNG. In wrapper, 6d. Post free.

IN THE PRESS.

THE PRICE SHE PAID. By **F. LEE BENEDICT**,
Author of "St. Simon's Niece," &c. 3 vols.

THE JUVENILE LEAD. By **FLORENCE MARRYAT**,
Author of "My Sister the Actress," "A Broken Blossom," &c. 3 vols.

ON DANGEROUS GROUND. By **MISS DREWRY**.
3 vols.

FAIR FACES AND TRUE HEARTS. By the
Author of "Margaret Mortimer's Second Husband."
3 vols.

BELL AND THE DOCTOR. By **T. SHARP**.
3 vols.

MOLLIE DARLING. By **LADY CONSTANCE HOWARD**,
Author of "Sweetheart and Wife." 3 vols.

ENTRANCED WITH A DREAM. By **RICHARD ROWLATT**,
Author of "Fishing in Deep Waters."
3 vols.

FRIENDS AND LOVERS. By **ANNIE THOMAS**,
Author of "Dennis Donne," &c. 3 vols.

MY CONNAUGHT COUSINS. By **HARRIETT JAY**,
Author of "Two Men and a Maid," "The Queen of Connaught," &c. 3 vols.

